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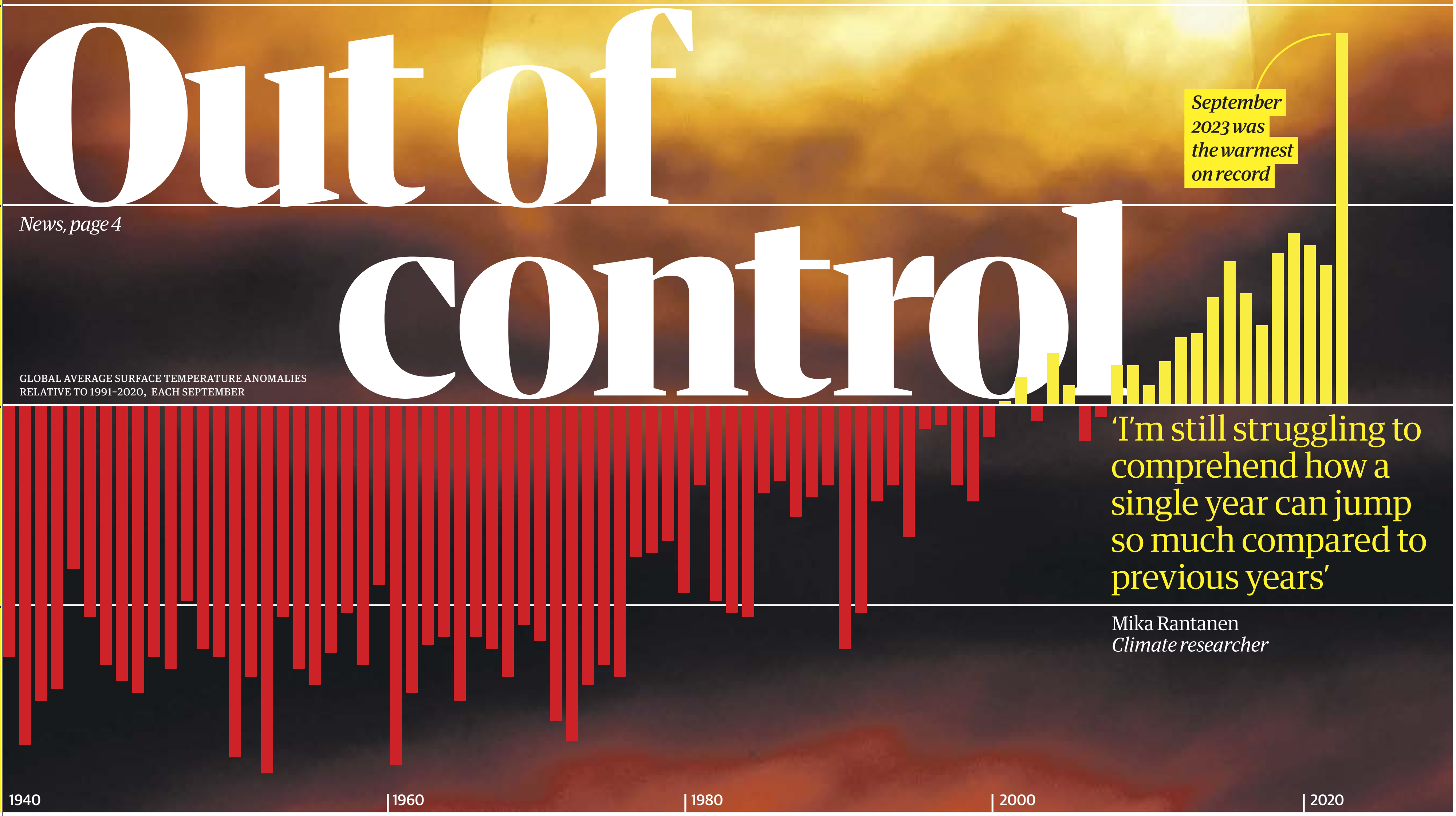
The Guardian

Newspaper of the year

Scientists stunned by planet's record September heat

Out of control

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'I'm still struggling to comprehend how a single year can jump so much compared to previous years'

Mika Rantanen
Climate researcher

Starmer must be bold, urges team from Labour 1997 win

Exclusive

Kiran Stacey
Political correspondent

Keir Starmer's caution risks damaging his chance of winning the next election, according to key figures from Tony Blair's 1997 campaign who say the current Labour leader is in danger of learning the wrong lessons from his predecessor's victory.

Some of those core to Blair's election win have told the Guardian they believe the Labour party is not yet ready for government, and needs to set out a much clearer policy platform to win voters' trust.

The comments come as Starmer prepares to head to Liverpool for what is likely to be the last party conference before an election and the most important of his career. Many in the party hope he will use his speech on Tuesday to define himself more clearly in voters' minds and set out dividing lines with the Tories on issues such as completing HS2 and ending the two-child benefit cap.

Alastair Campbell, Blair's former director of communications, said: "You want policy, and you want your policies to be known about, and you want to be able to defend them and to argue them. I sometimes worry that the Labour party today doesn't. I don't often get that sense of that sort of relentless, restless, obsessive attention to detail focusing on everything that you need to focus on …

"[In 1996 and 1997] we were not happy if we were not making the news and we weren't making the weather and we weren't actually being attacked. Because sometimes being attacked is the only way that you can get out there and make your case."

Other senior Blairites, including Lord Falconer and David Miliband, urged the Labour leader not to shy away from promising bold economic policies in particular.

Peter Mandelson, 7 →

Exclusive

Building companies saved billions from Tory delays to carbon rules

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Sly Stone interview

Inside G2 Film & Music



Joan Baez *'I talk to trees to get answers'*



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News



◀ *European leaders have agreed a plan to try to stop people smugglers across the continent after interventions from Rishi Sunak and Giorgia Meloni*
PHOTOGRAPH: SIMON DAWSON/NO 10

EU joins forces with UK and Albania in effort to stop people smugglers

Lisa O'Carroll *Granada*
Aubrey Allegretti

The EU has joined forces with the UK and Albania to extend the fight against people smugglers across the wider continent, after forceful interventions by Giorgia Meloni and Rishi Sunak at a summit of 47 European leaders in Spain.

The plan was forged on the sidelines of the European Political Community summit in Granada with the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, and the leaders of France, the Netherlands and Albania – Emmanuel Macron, Mark Rutte and Edi Rama – joining the Italian and UK prime ministers.

Macron told reporters they had agreed a new "five-point plan" to build on and then export to the entire membership of the EPC to create the first concerted continent-wide fight against people smugglers.

Not only would they tackle criminals operating boats in the Mediterranean and the Channel but also organised crime in wider Europe, he said.

"We will enlarge this format and this approach to the EPC because it makes much more sense as we will have the coalition of the willing: members of the EU, the European Commission plus Albania and the UK and all the other countries ready to join the initiative.

"So we will elaborate on a five-point document and we propose the other members of the EPC can join if they want," he added.

The plan was considered an endorsement for Sunak's campaign to force migration on to the agenda at the summit at the 11th hour. Despite a diplomatic row with the host country, Spain, it was absent from the agenda until Wednesday night when it was revealed that Sunak and Meloni had forced it on to leaders' schedules.

Earlier in the day, there were rumours over the future of the EPC itself after Sunak cancelled a press conference.

One diplomat reported that the British prime minister was frustrated that migration was not top of the agenda and could not understand why as it is the hottest political topic both in the EU and the UK.

It is understood Sunak is also seeking guarantees that migration will remain the priority at the next EPC summit, which is scheduled to be held in London in June.

"His feeling is if migration is not the focus at next year's EPC there is no point in having it," said one senior diplomat. "But we are confident that it will happen, he just needs it to work for him in order to make the commitment to host it," they added.

Sources say he was also frustrated that a new deal with the EU's border protection agency, Frontex, which would give the UK access to EU intelligence, had not yet been signed off.

A No 10 source insisted Sunak did not snub the conference by not hosting a press conference as he was "prioritising meetings with his counterparts to discuss migration" and pointed to him having done more than 40 interviews in the past week, during the Conservative party conference.

However, government sources suggested there was more to the prospective snub than met the eye. They said that Sunak had refused to confirm the rough details of when the next summit, due to be held in the UK, would be.

But after successfully forcing migration on to the agenda, the UK, EU and Albania will work on putting their five-point plan into operation and invited all 17 non-EU members of the EPC to join a continent-wide alliance against people smugglers.

They will offer other countries assistance to strengthen their borders and close down people smuggling through shared intelligence and police and security strategies.

A briefing document, seen by the Guardian, reveals they will also work on strengthening search and rescue missions to avert a repeat of the Greek boat tragedy this summer in which hundreds died.

They will also intensify efforts in Africa with "comprehensive partnerships with key countries to address root causes of migration". And they have pledged to work on "opportunities for humanitarian admission and resettlement to those entitled to protection".

Last week the European Commission revealed there were 600,000 stuck in limbo in the EU awaiting decisions on asylum applications.

CPS updates guidance on when to bring charges over mercy killings

Haroon Siddique
Legal affairs correspondent

Prosecutors in England and Wales have been given guidance on when it may not be appropriate to bring charges in cases of mercy killings.

Mercy killings are not defined in statute and are not a defence to murder or manslaughter. Yesterday, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for the first time set out a list of factors to consider when determining whether it is appropriate to bring charges.

The updated guidelines, which also cover suicide pacts, say a prosecution is less likely if the deceased person had reached a voluntary, clear, settled and informed decision that they wished for their life to end and the suspect was motivated only by compassion.

Another factor to consider is if their assistance "may be characterised as reluctant, in the face of significant emotional pressure due to the victim's wish for their life to end".

Max Hill KC, the director of public prosecutions, said: "It is vital our prosecutors are given the clearest possible additional guidance to make decisions on whether the legal test for criminal charges has been met in these complex cases.

"A prosecution will usually take place unless the prosecutor is satisfied that there are public interest factors tending against prosecution which outweigh those tending in favour. Each case must be considered on its own facts and on its own merits. Prosecutors must decide the importance of each public interest factor in the circumstances of each case and go on to make an overall assessment."

Factors tending in favour of prosecution include if the suspect influenced the victim not to seek medical treatment, palliative care and/or independent professional advice or denied them access to such treatment, care or support. Another is if the suspect was acting in their capacity as a medical doctor, nurse, or other healthcare professional and the victim was in their care.

Previous guidance, now removed, included a statement which said: "Subject to sufficiency of evidence, a prosecution is almost certainly required, even in cases such as 'mercy killing' of a sick relative."

The new guidelines on mercy killing are similar to those issued in 2010 for encouraging or assisting another person's suicide, which is punishable by up to 14 years in prison under the Suicide Act 1961.

Sarah Wootton, chief executive of Dignity in Dying, said: "We strongly welcome the new guidance issued by the CPS today, which distinguishes between malicious homicide and compassionate assistance to die and makes clear that acts of love and compassion should be treated differently to serious crimes by the criminal justice system. This is a victory for Dignity in Dying's Compassion is Not a Crime campaign and today's guidance is a major milestone on the road to assisted dying law reform."



▲ *Sarah Wootton called it a victory for Dignity in Dying's campaign*

The Compassion Is Not A Crime campaign was led by Joy Munns, daughter of Mavis Eccleston, who was charged with murder and manslaughter after her terminally ill husband, Dennis, asked her to help him end his life. The couple attempted to take their lives together in 2018, but Mavis recovered and was charged. In September 2019 she was unanimously acquitted by a jury of both charges.

Munns said: "This new guidance might have saved our mom from a trial, but it wouldn't have saved Dad from a bad death. The law put my parents in an impossible position. It must be properly reformed so that people like Dad can have the choice that so many dying people want."

▼ *A bill to make Peru's film industry more competitive has been proposed in the wake of the Paddington snub* PHOTOGRAPH: STUDIOCANAL/ALLSTAR



Fur flying in Peru after red tape blamed for decision to film Paddington in Colombia

Dan Collyns
Lima

When it came to finding a filming location for Paddington in Peru, the clue really should have been in the name. But after British movie producers chose Colombia as the place to film scenes which are supposed to show Paddington's home country, the reaction in Lima has been furious.

Critics of Peru's inability to attract even the most obvious of productions has prompted a call by opposition lawmakers for new legislation that would cut red tape and rein in subsidies handed out to domestic film-makers, in an attempt to make the industry more "dynamic" and attractive to overseas productions.

Legislation put forward by the rightwing lawmaker Adriana Tudela cited the "lack of incentives and the high number of national and local bureaucratic barriers to filming in Peru" as the principal reasons for the mislocation of the third Paddington movie, due out in 2024.

But the plan could come at a cost. At present, the government subsidises Indigenous and regional film-makers in a policy of positive discrimination enshrined in law.

Tudela's bill proposes a 50% cap on state incentives for the total production cost of national films – making the industry more competitive. But industry insiders described the idea as an attack on cultural diversity that would cripple Peru's award-winning Indigenous cinema.



▲ *El Caso Monroy, a film by Josué Méndez, a Peruvian film-maker who has defended government support for locally produced films* PHOTOGRAPH: TONDERO

"I do believe there are good Peruvian films," Tudela told El Comercio newspaper. "But the market needs to be much more dynamic … in order to have an industry that is self-sustainable and does not depend solely on subsidies."

Peru's ministry of culture has dismissed the bill as "unviable", adding that the government "recognises the cultural diversity of the country and values and encourages the participation of Indigenous or native populations".

"If they knew this industry, if they knew the inequalities that exist between Lima and the provinces, they would realise that government support is very important – and that it has borne fruit in the last few years," said Josué Mendéz, an award-winning Peruvian film director.

"To erase all the cinema that is made in the regions and allow only one type of cinema from Lima, in Spanish, would cancel a large part of the identity of the country," said Mendéz, whose feature film El Caso Monroy was partially funded by the culture ministry and opens in local cinemas this week.

Film-makers say the existing 2019 law allows national cinema to reach goals already achieved in neighbouring Chile and Colombia, thanks to state backing of about $6.8m (£5.6m).

The rightwing congressman Alejandro Cavero provoked particular ire last week when he described Peruvian films as "very bad" when voicing his support for the bill, adding: "Economic stimuli are distributed, and I don't see a single film that has won absolutely anything."

Award-winning Peruvian films that depict Indigenous culture include Retablo (2017), which won more than 20 international awards including a Berlin Teddy (for LGBTQ+ films) for best newcomer as well as a Bafta nomination; Wiñaypacha (2016), the first Peruvian film entirely in the Aymara language, won awards at the Guadalajara film festival. Willaq Pirqa, about a boy, 13, in a Quechua-speaking village in Cusco who discovers the magic of cinema, was a box-office success in Peru last year.

In 2010, La Teta Asustada (Milk of Sorrow), directed by Claudia Llosa, became the first Peruvian film to be nominated for an Oscar in the best foreign film category.

"There is always going to be a sector in politics that wants to control the narrative," said Mendéz. "This is an attack on culture and it is up to us to defend it."

'Like a brick': bumblebees drop to ground to stop hornet attacks

Steven Morris

Bumblebees are not fast or agile enough flyers to evade an attack from an Asian hornet and an airborne scrap would almost certainly bring victory for the latter.

But University of Exeter scientists have found that when attacked buff-tailed bumblebees have a dramatic and effective response: they simply drop out of the air "like a brick", taking the hornet with them. The bee and the hornet hit the ground with such force the hornet either loses its grip or the bee gets the chance to raise its sting and repel the attacker.

Thomas O'Shea-Wheller, at Exeter University's Environment and Sustainability Institute, in Penryn, Cornwall, said he and his colleagues were impressed when they observed the bumblebees' technique as they did fieldwork in Galicia, Spain.

"The second the hornet grabs on to or clashes with the bee in the air the bee drops like a brick straight on to the ground," he said. "Bumblebees even at the best of times don't appear to the be the most graceful of flyers. If they stop flying they go straight down. We really didn't expect this. Hornets are pretty persistent but that slam-dunk action makes them let go. It bounces them off. Sometimes they hang on, then the bee goes on its back, tussles and put its sting up. It makes it too much effort for the hornet."

Buff-tailed bumblebees (*Bombus terrestris*) nest underground, he said, so it could be they felt more confident heading to the ground when attacked. "If you have a predator that's trying to grab hold, completely bailing out … turns out to be very effective." Other insects, such as honeybees, often do not survive when attacked by Asian hornets, which hail from east Asia but increasingly are found in Europe. "The honeybee tussles in the air and the hornet will usually decapitate it."

The Exeter team witnessed more than 120 attacks at colony entrances and were stunned to find bumblebees fought off the hornets every time.



▲ *The buff-tailed bumblebee: hitting the ground forces hornets to lose grip*

But it was not all good news for the bumblebees. The scientists, who published their research in the journal Communications Biology, found that colonies suffered reduced growth rates in areas with high numbers of Asian hornets.

O'Shea-Wheller said. "It's possible that some external factor is good for Asian hornets but bad for bumblebees. However, it's perhaps more likely that the presence of Asian hornets limits the success of bumblebee colonies. Bumblebees have been reported in the diet of Asian hornets."

Sightings of Asian hornets in the UK are at record levels this year, raising fears for native pollinators.

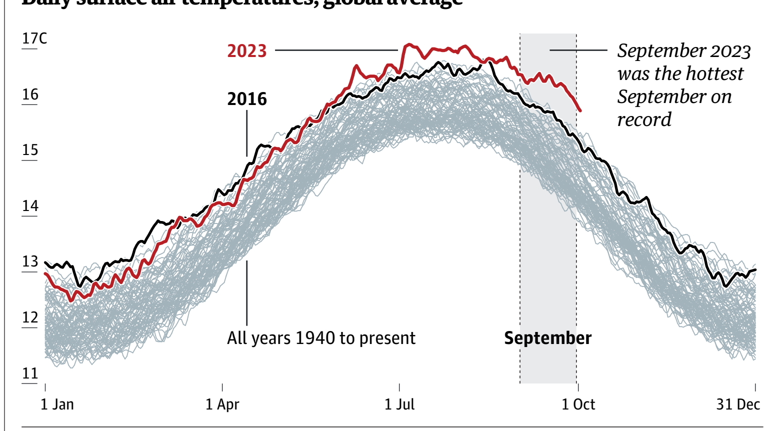
'Gobsmackingly bananas': climate scientists stunned by record-breaking September heat



▲ A paddy field in Purworejo in Central Java, Indonesia, showing the effects of months of drought
PHOTOGRAPH: DASRIL ROSZANDI/ANADOLU/GETTY



▲ A wildfire in the Dadia national park in Greece. September was 1.8C warmer than pre-industrial levels
PHOTOGRAPH: ALEXANDROS AVRAMIDIS/REUTERS



Damian Carrington
Environment editor

Global temperatures soared to a record in September by a huge margin, stunning scientists and leading one to describe it as "absolutely gobsmackingly bananas".

The hottest September on record follows the hottest August and hottest July, with the latter being the hottest month ever recorded. The high temperatures have driven extreme heatwaves and wildfires across the world.

September 2023 beat the previous record for that month by 0.5C, the largest jump in temperature ever seen. September was about 1.8C warmer than pre-industrial levels. Datasets from European and Japanese scientists confirm the rise.

The heat is the result of the continuing high levels of CO_2 emissions combined with a rapid flip of the planet's biggest natural climate phenomenon, El Niño. The previous three years saw La Niña conditions in the Pacific Ocean, which lowers global temperature by a few tenths of a degree as more heat is stored in the ocean.

Conditions have now rebounded to an El Niño event, which releases ocean heat and drives up temperatures. It is all but certain that 2023 will be the hottest on record and 2024 may even exceed that, as the heating impact of El Niño is felt most in the year after it begins.

"September was, in my professional opinion as a climate scientist, absolutely gobsmackingly bananas," said Zeke Hausfather at the Berkeley Earth climate data project.

Mika Rantanen, a researcher at the Finnish Meteorological Institute, said: "I'm still struggling to comprehend how a single year can jump so much compared with previous years."

Prof Ed Hawkins, a climatologist at the University of Reading, said the heat seen this summer was "extraordinary".

Samantha Burgess, at the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service, said: "The unprecedented temperatures for the time of year observed in September have broken records by an extraordinary amount [with] 2023 on track to be the warmest year and about 1.4C above pre-industrial average temperatures"

She added: "Two months out from Cop28 [the UN climate conference] the sense of urgency for ambitious climate action has never been more critical."

The heat hit record levels in many countries, including France, Germany and Poland. The UK had its joint hottest September on record, the Met Office reported, in data that goes back to 1884.

In Australia, the climate scientist and author Joëlle Gergis said: "Observations of Australia's climate in September are shocking. Figures show where maximum temperatures were the highest on record, with many areas 3C to 5C above average."

She added: "Rainfall deficits are primed for drought. Summer is going to be brutal."

While human-caused global heating and El Niño are the biggest factors causing the record-breaking temperatures, other factors may be contributing small increases as well, Hausfather said. These include a rise in activity in the 11-year solar cycle, cuts in sun-blocking sulphur emissions from shipping and industry and a volcanic eruption in Tonga that released a large amount of water vapour, which traps heat.

In August, the Guardian asked 45 leading climate scientists from around the world about the record-breaking temperatures.

They said that despite it certainly feeling as if events had taken an alarming turn the broad global heating trend to date was entirely in line with three decades of scientific predictions.

Increasingly severe weather had also been long signposted by scientists, though the speed and intensity of the reality and the unexpected vulnerability of many populations concerned some.

The off-the-charts sea temperatures and Antarctic sea ice loss were seen as the most shocking events.

The scientists said the exceptional events of 2023 could be a normal year in just a decade unless there is a dramatic increase in climate action.

The researchers overwhelmingly pointed to one action as critical: slashing the burning of fossil fuels down to zero.

Unmonitored toxic road runoff polluting rivers across England

Rachel Salvidge
Leana Hosea

A toxic cocktail of damaging chemicals created by road pollution is flowing into England's rivers and no regulator is monitoring the scale of its impact on wildlife or public health.

More than 18,000 outfalls, such as pipes, and about 7,700 soakaways (pits often filled with rubble into which water drains) managed by National Highways discharge rainwater potentially contaminated with heavy metals, hydrocarbons, microplastics and other chemicals from the main road network into rivers and on to land.

Last month, National Highways reported it had assessed its discharge points and found 1,236 outfalls and soakaways had "a potential high risk of pollution". Of these, "145 have a verified high risk of pollution and require mitigation" while the remaining 1,091 had a "potential high risk" of "polluting the water environment".

Analysis by the Guardian and Watershed Investigations of such sites reveals about 70 are in areas protected because of important habitats or wildlife, and about 250 are within 1km (0.6 miles) of a protected site, while hundreds discharge to rivers and land with no formal protection.

Despite urban and transport pollution accounting for 18% of England's water bodies failing to meet good ecological standards, highways outfalls are not regulated under environmental rules, meaning less scrutiny.

Guy Linley-Adams, a solicitor at the charity Wildfish, said: "The Environment Agency has the power to bring highways drains and discharges under environmental permitting if they involve 'the discharge or entry to inland freshwaters, coastal waters or relevant territorial waters of any … poisonous, noxious or polluting matter'. That would certainly appear to be the case here."

National Highways said it did not routinely monitor runoff because the results varied depending on rainfall and river flows, and it would not be practical or good value. It had instead developed a predictive tool to determine scenarios where the risk to water quality was unacceptably high.



▲ Road runoff may be contaminated with heavy metals and microplastics

Some of England's rare and fragile chalk streams are under threat from runoff: the M1 discharges into the River Colne near Watford, and runoff from the M3 flows into the River Itchen in Hampshire. A cluster of 24 outfalls surrounds the River Kennet and its tributaries near Reading.

An Environment Agency spokesperson said outfalls and road drains were "not directly regulated" by the agency "but we do work with the government and partner organisations to reduce pollution from roads".

Mellow fruitfulness
Summer rain brings autumn colours
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'Unmistakable voice'
Jon Fosse wins Nobel prize in literature
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Behaviour in schools is worse since Covid, says Ofsted head

Sally Weale
Education correspondent

Schools in England are being plagued by increasing levels of poor behaviour since the pandemic, with pupils refusing to comply with rules, talking back to teachers and walking out of class mid-lesson, according to the head of Ofsted.

Suspensions for physical assault, threatening behaviour and verbal abuse have also gone up, with even primary school children being defiant and refusing to follow simple classroom instructions, such as being asked to get out their books.

In some cases, children are turning up at school for registration and are on the premises, but then fail to go to any lessons, the outgoing chief inspector of schools in England, Amanda Spielman, said in an exclusive interview with the Guardian.

Poor behaviour and disruption in the classroom are also contributing to anxiety and poor mental health among some pupils, she said, which is in turn fuelling high levels of absence in English schools.

In a recent Ofsted survey, 42% of teachers who took part said behaviour was worse than pre-pandemic. Initial findings from Ofsted research, to be published next year, show the three most frequent behaviour problems are persistent low-level disruption, cited by 67% of staff; refusal behaviour or passive non-compliance, where a child ignores an authority figure (67%); and talking back to staff (64%).

Spielman said: "There's definitely some real challenges for schools to manage at the moment. Schools are having to deal with things like more children just walking out of classes, or being registered at school but failing to show up in lessons."

Spielman is due to address these issues in a speech to the Confederation of School Trusts today, when she is expected to say: "I know how hard it is for many of you to deal with challenging behaviour at the moment. But poor behaviour can make other children anxious about school.

"It's not enough just to set the rules and sit back. Children need to be taught behaviour and routines explicitly, and be given time to learn and practise meeting those expectations."

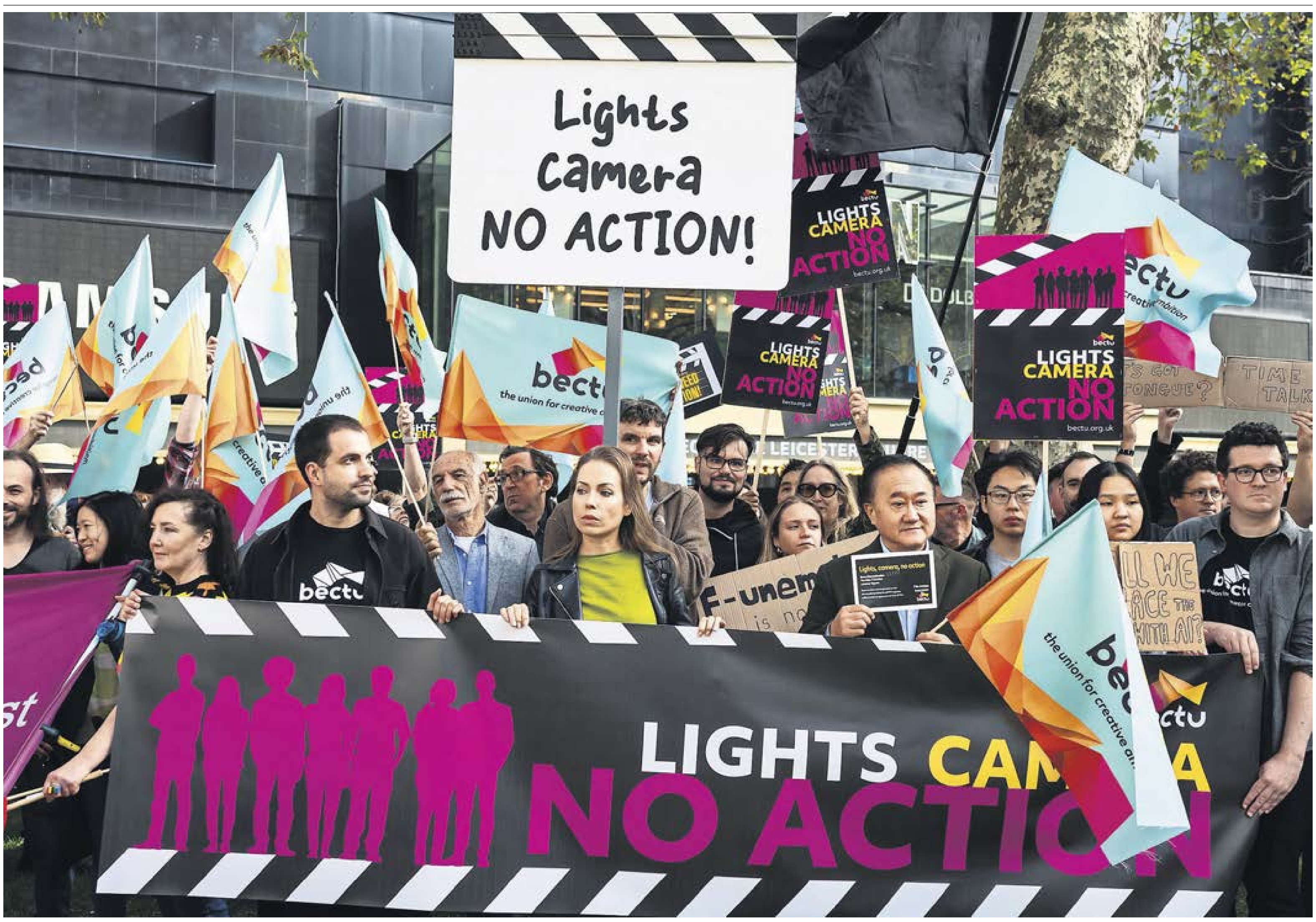
The government's own figures show the number of temporary suspensions went up to 578,280 in 2021-22, the latest year for which figures are available - up from 352,454 in 2020-21, when schools were severely disrupted by Covid, and 438,300 before the pandemic in 2018-19. The most common reason for a temporary suspension was persistent disruptive behaviour.

Spielman blames the increase in disruptive behaviour on the loss of socialisation as a result of Covid: "Many young people have not had as much of the experience and opportunity to practise as they normally would have done."

The chief inspector was speaking shortly after the education secretary, Gillian Keegan, addressing the Conservative party conference, announced new guidance to ban mobile phones throughout the school day, to reduce distraction, disruptive behaviour and bullying.

Spielman said a ban on phones could help with behaviour problems but was not "a magic bullet", and warned the damage done by Covid lockdowns would take years to repair.

The Department for Education said: "We are determined all pupils learn in a calm environment, which is why we have banned mobile phone use in schools. This is on top of our £10m behaviour hubs programme, which is supporting up to 700 schools to improve their behaviour. We are also supporting schools through our recently expanded attendance hubs, mentors programme, and by setting up the Attendance Action Alliance of national leaders from education, children's social care and allied services."



Silence on set Members of the creative industries union Bectu at a rally in Leicester Square, central London, yesterday, to urge employers in the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers in the US to negotiate a "swift and fair resolution" to the Hollywood actors' strike, which is having a severe effect on freelance film and TV production workers in the UK.

PHOTOGRAPH: LEON NEAL/GETTY

Transgender hate crime is at an all-time high, says Home Office

Michael Goodier

A record number of hate crimes were committed against transgender people last year in England and Wales, even as racist and homophobic hate crimes recorded by police fell for the first time on record.

In the year ending March 2023, 4,732 hate crimes against transgender people were recorded - a rise of 11% on the previous year. The Home Office report said that comments by politicians and the media over the last year may have led to an increase in these offences.

Rishi Sunak's keynote speech to the Conservative conference seemed to argue that transgender identities were not valid. "A man is a man and a woman is a woman. That's just common sense," he said.

The number of racist hate crimes recorded by police in England and Wales fell for the first time on record - driven by a decrease in racially aggravated public fear, alarm or distress offences.

Figures released by the Home Office show there were 101,906 racist hate crimes recorded in 2022-23 - down 6% from 2021-22. However, the figure was still higher than the 90,909 recorded in 2020-21.

Homophobic hate crimes also fell by 6% over the last year to 24,102 - the first fall for more than a decade.

Just 7% of all hate crimes were dealt with by a charge or court summons - down from 9% in the year ending March 2022. There was an increase in cases where victims did not support police action as well as cases where no suspect was identified.

Transgender and disability-based hate crimes were less likely to result in a charge or court summons than hate crimes based on a person's race or religion. The Home Office report said: "Transgender issues have been heavily discussed by politicians, the media and on social media over the last year, which may have led to an increase in these offences, or more awareness in the police in the identification and recording of these crimes."

The LGBTQ+ group Stonewall criticised political leaders for not having acted "seriously or quickly enough" against hate crime, adding that "many of them are filling the public domain with toxic language that dehumanises LGBTQ+ people".

Leni Morris, the CEO of the LGBT+ anti-abuse charity Galop, said they had seen "a 65% increase in the LGBT+ victims of hate crime asking us for support".

National
Politics



▲ *HS2 construction work in Birmingham. Rishi Sunak scrapped the Birmingham to Manchester leg this week* PHOTOGRAPH: JACOB KING/PA

Sunak's 'spiteful' sale of HS2 land dashes Labour hopes of reviving project

Helen Pidd
North of England editor

A future Labour government would not be able to easily reverse Rishi Sunak's decision to scrap the northern leg of HS2, as he has authorised the sale of property which was compulsorily purchased on part of the route in a move one rail expert has described as "spiteful".

The mayor of Liverpool city region, Steve Rotheram, said the move had killed HS2 "stone dead" and would "tie any future government's hands, and make the delivery of HS2 for the north all but impossible".

The Labour leader, Keir Starmer, refused to commit to building HS2 yesterday, telling ITV News Meridian: "What I can't do is stand here, now they have taken a wrecking ball to this project, and say that we will simply reverse it. What I will say is we will work with leaders across the country to make sure that we have the transport we need between our cities and within our cities, and projects that can actually be delivered."

His comments came as the government failed to deny that HS2 would also not be extended to Euston unless enough private investment was secured to pay for the new station. "There is already support and interest from the private sector. Ministers have had discussions with key partners since the announcement," a government spokesperson said.

Mark Harper, the transport secretary, conceded yesterday that paying off contracts awarded for cancelled HS2 sections would cost hundreds of millions of pounds. But he told BBC Breakfast that the cost of pulling out of the agreements would "broadly balance out" with money recovered from selling land and property acquired for the high-speed railway.

Labour proponents of HS2 were blindsided on Wednesday when the prime minister not only cancelled the Manchester leg but made it extremely difficult for the project to be restarted. "We are now trying to understand where this leaves us," said one party source. "Selling off the land was unexpected."

Gareth Dennis, a railway engineer and writer, said the decision to sell off the land was motivated by "spite" and was in effect "salting the earth" to make it extremely difficult for Labour to restart the project.

The Department for Transport (DfT) said that within weeks it would lift the so-called safeguarding order on phase 2a of the route, which would have run from Birmingham to Crewe. Safeguarding is the process HS2 Ltd and the government use to buy up land needed for the railway. As of last week, HS2 Ltd had bought 239 properties on phase 2a at a cost of £219.3m.

"Any property that is no longer required for HS2 will be sold and a programme is being developed to do this," said the DfT in its Network North prospectus, released on Wednesday. "Phase 2a safeguarding will be formally lifted in weeks."

However, the DfT confirmed yesterday that safeguarding will remain for now on the Crewe to Manchester leg (phase 2b west) as well as the Birmingham to Leeds spur (phase 2b east), which was paused by the government in November 2021. "Phase 2b safeguarding will be amended by summer next year," said the government, to retain any land needed for Northern Powerhouse Rail, a new east-west line across the Pennines.

Dennis said: "I knew Sunak would cancel HS2 to Manchester but I didn't expect him to be so spiteful that he would authorise the sell-off of land on the route. There are barely any votes in lifting the safeguarding. It's pure salting the earth to make it extremely hard for Labour to build it.

"The land is not going to be returned to nature. It's going to be developed on. That will make it much more expensive and much more complex should any future government want to build it."

> ***'It's pure salting the earth to make it extremely hard for Labour to build it'***
>
> **Gareth Dennis**
> *Engineer and writer*

Rotheram said: "The Liverpool city region was set to benefit from a £15bn economic boost from the delivery of HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail in full. Almost overnight, the prime minister has robbed us of that chance to grow and develop our economy."

In his first interview since his speech to the Tory party conference, Sunak declined to apologise for the decision to scrap the line. He said "the facts have changed" on HS2, pointing to a doubling of costs since the project was approved and changes in passenger behaviour since Covid as evidence that the economic case had been "severely eroded". He said many more people would be helped by the boosting of other transport schemes instead.

Network North

Ten dodgy bits of PM's new rail announcement

Helen Pidd

Life moves fast when you're Rishi Sunak. On Tuesday, he insisted he was not going to be bounced into making a quick decision on HS2. Within 24 hours he was standing up at Conservative party conference heralding a new transport network.

Not only did he scrap HS2 north of Birmingham, dismissing it as "the ultimate example of the old consensus", but he had somehow found time to sign off a 40-page prospectus for Network North. Subtitle: TRANSFORMING BRITISH TRANSPORT.

Though no one could possibly believe the document was actually drawn up during a conference all-nighter, it did bear all the hallmarks of something rustled up in a hurry. And some of the things Sunak has said since have illustrated a significant lack of understanding of the realities of transport in the north of England and a forgetfulness around what he or his predecessors had already announced.

Here are 10 dodgy bits in and around the Network North announcement:

1. The front page map of the prospectus seems to relocate Manchester to Preston.

2. It says new funding to Greater Manchester could see the Metrolink tram network extended to Manchester airport. The airport link opened in 2014.

3. Labour analysis of Sunak's promises found the vast majority - 85% - have already been promised or committed to during the Conservatives' 13-year reign.

4. In a promotional video to promote Network North, Sunak said he would quadruple the number of trains between Sheffield and Leeds. As the travel journalist Simon Calder pointed out, there are already five per hour each way, and so Sunak appeared to be promising 20 trains per hour - one every three minutes - which would essentially turn the route into a tube line. Great news for God's own county! Alas, it seems the prime minister failed to read the small print of Network North, which promised to increase the number of *fast* trains between these two Yorkshire cities to three or four an hour.

5. After Sunak's speech on Wednesday, the government issued a list of projects it was committed to. One of these read: "The Leamside Line, closed in 1964, will also be reopened." Come yesterday morning, the promise to reinstate the 21-mile route in County Durham mysteriously disappeared from the Network North prospectus. The transport minister Richard Holden told the Local Democracy Reporting Service the government was now only "committed to looking into it".

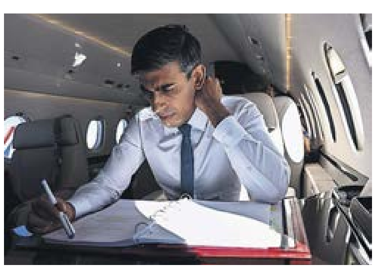
6. Sunak has a very elastic definition of the "north", with Network North promising to improve rail connections to Plymouth, which is 250 miles from Crewe - the Cheshire town which many people see as the gateway to the north of England.

7. Speaking of Crewe, it went from being a key hub on HS2 to being probably the biggest loser of the cancellation debacle. This once great railway town is mentioned only passing in Network North, when there is talk of £1bn investment in the north Wales mainline, which starts in Crewe.

8. There is little in Network North about creating new capacity on the chock-a-block west coast mainline north of Birmingham, particularly the Castlefield corridor into Manchester, which is classed by Network Rail as "officially congested". According to Craig Browne, the deputy leader of Cheshire East council, "the rail journey from Crewe to Manchester on the west coast mainline is mostly two tracks [one in each direction], which means you can only go at the speed of the slowest train". HS2 was supposed to take the fastest intercity services off the main line, freeing up space for way more local stopping services.

9. Bristol - which is north of Devon and Cornwall and not a lot else in England - also saw its opportunities snatched away with a quick swipe of the delete key. On Wednesday, government documents promised "£100m for a mass transit system for Bristol to revolutionise travel in and around Bristol". Today, that pledge has vanished. It appears to have been replaced with a broader pledge to give the west of England combined authority £100m, which it could spend on various things in its region.

10. Network North committed to upgrading the A259 from Bognor Regis to that well-known northern city of Southampton, but yesterday ministers admitted they actually meant Littlehampton, 45 miles away.



▲ *Rishi Sunak heads to a European summit after the Tory conference*



Starmer urged to set out clear policy platform to win the trust of voters

Continued *from page 1*

meanwhile, said Labour needed to do more policy work. Mandelson, Labour's campaign director for the 1997 election, and a close confidant of Starmer, said: "Do I think the Labour party under Keir Starmer is ready for government? Well actually, I don't. But then the election isn't going to take place tomorrow or the day after. They have another year.

He added: "I just implore people [in Labour] to realise, not just that they shouldn't be complacent … but just how much detailed, hard slog and work is involved in preparing the programme of government. Not just a vision, but a real programme of government policies that flow from it that you have to have in place if you're going to hit the ground running on day one after that election."

The comments were made as part of a two-part podcast for the Guardian's Today in Focus, which examines what Labour did in the year before it took power in 1997, and whether the current party is set to replicate that success. It is due to be broadcast on Monday and Tuesday.

As Labour members assemble in Liverpool for the conference, the party is about 17 points ahead in the polls, enough for a landslide victory if repeated at a general election.

Starmer has been scaling back or abandoning a range of policies, including dropping a pledge to abolish tuition fees and delaying the full implementation of a £28bn green fund. He has promised not to raise income tax or wealth taxes to pay for higher public spending, and dropped plans to strip private schools of their charitable status.

After Labour lost the recent byelection in Uxbridge following a Tory campaign that centred on the party's clean-air policies in London, Starmer said: "We are doing something very wrong if policies put forward by the Labour party end up on each and every Tory leaflet."

Starmer has also been taking unofficial advice from many of those integral to the 1997 election win, including Blair and Mandelson. Some are comparing Starmer's approach to that of Blair in 1996 and early 1997, when he was described as being like a museum curator carrying a priceless Ming vase across a slippery floor.

Starmer told the BBC last month: "I talk to Tony and Gordon [Brown], particularly about the period set of 95, 96 into 97 - not actually about specific policies, because that's too long ago, but about the pace, the intensity, the sort of preparation that we need, the mindset if you like."

Campbell argued Starmer's caution does not reflect what Blair did, however. "I was quite happy if the Tories were putting up policies on their leaflets because it gave us an opportunity to argue them," he said.

"One of the big ones I remember was the minimum wage. They had this big attack on the minimum wage - a minimum wage will cost you your job, a minimum wage will cost 2m jobs - and we were able to go out and argue against that."

Some are warning Starmer to be bolder on tax and spending than Blair was in 1997, given the different economic backdrop.

By May 1997, the country had experienced 19 successive quarters without the economy shrinking, and inflation was below 3%.

Falconer, a former minister and Blair's ex-housemate, said: "[Labour in 1997] said they would match the Tories' tax and spend position, which is fine when the economy is not the issue. But where the economy and the cost of living is the issue, simply to mimic the Conservatives may not offer enough change to the public.

"You've got to have some convincing explanation about what you're going to do differently on the economy from the Conservative party."

Miliband, Blair's former head of policy, said the party in 1997 was "radical, as well as credible". But he also argued Labour was in danger of focusing too much on trying to repeat 1997 and should instead look to 1974 for lessons. Labour won two elections that year against the backdrop of high inflation, industrial strife and rising unemployment.

Miliband said: "What's clear is that 'steady as she goes' wasn't enough in 74. It wasn't enough politically, and it wasn't enough economically … It can't just be the 90s that is the point of reference."

Starmer's office did not respond to a request to comment. But speaking to ITV News Granada yesterday, the Labour leader addressed concerns he was being too cautious.

"I've had enough of politicians who walk around a problem screaming about it but don't fix it," he said. "I want to fix problems and I work with other people to do that."

◀ *Keir Starmer has been scaling back or abandoning a range of Labour policies* PHOTOGRAPH: DUNCAN BRYCELAND/SHUTTERSTOCK

Blairite lessons *Pages 8-9* →

Supervised brushing at school
Teachers deride Labour plan

School leaders have accused Labour of "window dressing" after Keir Starmer pledged to introduce supervised toothbrushing for young children in England's primary schools.

While the policy is supported by the dentistry profession as a way of curbing decay, headteachers said it was not appropriate for their staff to check whether pupils had cleaned their teeth.

The Labour leader announced the pledge as part of a "rescue plan for NHS dentistry" that would include funding an extra 700,000 appointments for urgent treatments such as fillings.

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said: "This week we have seen guidance on mobile phones from government and a new dentistry duty from the opposition. This is not the immediate response needed to solve the mounting crises in school. We need to see greater ambition. We should demand more than window dressing from all of our politicians."

But Dr Charlotte Eckhardt, the dean of the faculty of dental surgery at the Royal College of Surgeons of England, said: "We strongly support supervised tooth brushing in schools and nurseries - this is now urgent.

"We know that children in deprived areas are at greater risk of poor oral health. By establishing supervised toothbrushing in school settings, we can directly improve children's oral health and influence their toothbrushing routine in the home," said Eckhardt.

The British Dental Association said it was "encouraged" by Labour's proposal, given ministerial inaction over introducing a similar scheme.

Richard Adams and Denis Campbell



▲ *Labour made the pledge as part of a 'rescue plan for NHS dentistry'*

'We needed to be radical'

What can Labour learn by looking back at Blair's 1997 landslide victory?





◀ Tony Blair and his wife, Cherie, in Downing Street after Labour's landslide victory; crowds gathered nearby to greet the new prime minister (right). 'A new dawn has broken,' he said in a speech at the Royal Festival Hall

PHOTOGRAPHS: MARTIN GODWIN/ THE GUARDIAN

Kiran Stacey
Political correspondent

As voters headed to the polls on the morning of 1 May 1997, Tony Blair turned to his old friend Charlie Falconer and asked an unexpected question.

"On the day of the election itself he asked me if he thought he'd get back to the bar - and he didn't mean the licensed bar, he meant the legal bar," Falconer recalls, 27 years later. Unconvinced by predictions of the Labour landslide to come, the party leader wanted to know whether he might be able to return to his old career as a barrister.

"I don't think anybody felt ... certainly not on the day of the election itself, that we're going to lose - except for Tony, who just couldn't believe what was about to happen," Falconer says.

He was speaking to the Guardian as part of a look back at 1996, focusing on what Labour did in the year before its landslide victory and asking whether today's party can replicate that success. A two-part Guardian Today in Focus podcast series on the topic will be broadcast next Monday and Tuesday.

Key figures from the time tell a tale of paranoia, frenetic activity, frequent infighting and, finally, overwhelming relief, as one of the most pivotal years in British politics played out.

Several also say that Keir Starmer, the current Labour leader, risks learning the wrong lessons from 1997 by being too cautious, arguing that Blair was more radical in his policy approach than many remember.

David Miliband, Blair's head of policy at the time, says: "We were having to reinforce our commitment to the electorate that we wouldn't be a risk for them, but we were also having to give them a sense of hope and change. In that sense, we needed to be radical as well as credible."

By early 1996, Blair had been Labour leader for 18 months. During that time he had stamped his authority over the party, most notably by forcing through changes to clause IV of the party's constitution to remove references to nationalisation. Blair's shift away from traditional socialism had paid dividends. The party was 26 points ahead in the polls, while Blair himself had an approval rating of plus-22.

But still voters were unsure. In 1995 the American pollster Stan Greenberg wrote a memo warning: "'Change' voters are turning to Labour, not because of Labour, but because of their disaffection with the Tories. Our main task is to make sure that this is as easy a choice as possible."

So the party entered 1996 with a mantra: "Reassurance, reassurance, reassurance". Blair and Gordon Brown agreed they must constantly reassure the public that this was not old Labour: they did not intend to raise taxes and public spending once in office.

The approach mirrors that being taken today by Starmer, who has spent much of 2023 changing or junking potentially controversial policies, from delaying the £28bn green prosperity fund to overturning the promise to drop university tuition fees. Those who were around in 1996, however, say there were two main differences between then and now.

First, Blair's project was the culmination of more than two decades of work. His two immediate predecessors, Neil Kinnock and John Smith, had done much of the policy formation that he enacted once in government, including the pledge to introduce a minimum wage and the promise to cut class sizes in primary schools.

> *'It was absolutely phenomenal ... people would come up to you in the street and say, "we're voting for Tony Blair"'*
>
> 
>
> **Harriet Harman**
> *Shadow cabinet*

Liam Byrne, who helped Labour reorganise its headquarters in 1996 and is now a Labour MP, says: "Starmer is trying to do in five years what Neil Kinnock, John Smith, Tony Blair did over many years."

Second, Blair was heading into an election after a period of sustained growth: the economy had not shrunk in a single quarter for nearly five years. That allowed him to promise to keep taxes low while still being able to spend the proceeds of growth. By contrast, Britain is still recovering from the Covid pandemic, and the economy shrank by 0.5% in July.

Falconer says: "In 1996-1997 the economy wasn't the issue. Today, though, you have got to have some convincing explanation about what you're going to do differently to the economy from the Conservative party."

While Blair embarked on his year reassuring the British public, many of those around him engaged in a period of rapid policy formation as they honed what would become the 1997 manifesto. Miliband says: "Tony gave me a very clear instruction when he hired me in June 1994. He said: 'Look, you've got to get rid of the policies that are going to lose us votes.' He called that 'bomb disposal'."

Bomb disposal was not always easy. Arguments were common and Blair and Brown, the shadow chancellor, frequently clashed over the policy detail. Brown wanted to create a Scottish parliament; Blair was adamant there should be a referendum first. Blair wanted a clear commitment to join the euro, Brown wanted to make sure it was tied down with preconditions. They even fought over how many pledges there should be on the pledge card, with Brown arguing five would be too limiting.

Peter Mandelson, who was the campaign coordinator, says: "They would be up all night, they were hammering away, drilling down. I don't think anyone in politics these days has any real sense of how hard everything was ... People in politics today sometimes feel it all looked so simple in Blair's day. But it wasn't."

Alastair Campbell, Blair's press secretary, adds: "Going through my diaries, it's a form of PTSD reliving all the different rows that we had, most of which thank God I'd forgotten. It wasn't deliberate, creating conflict, but the conflict just seemed to spill out there."

At that point there was little of the personal animosity that was later to poison the relationship between Brown and Blair.

The stormy policy debates also had a purpose. Those around Blair knew that they had to have something positive to say to voters when it came to the election: simply not being the Tories would not be enough. Campbell sums it up as "reassurance alongside the promise of radical change".





▲ *Tony Blair and Gordon Brown frequently clashed over policy detail in the run-up to the election*
PHOTOGRAPH: JOHNNY EGGITT/BBC/GETTY/AFP



THE Sun

An historic announcement from Britain's No1 newspaper

THE SUN BACKS BLAIR

Give change a chance

▲ *Blair and his aides had worked for years to get the Murdoch press's backing. The Sun's front page set the tone for much of the campaign*

Labour members gathered in Blackpool in late September 1996 for the party's last conference before the election. England had hosted the Euros that summer; the Spice Girls were conquering the US; Oasis and Blur were making British rock relevant again. The country was in an optimistic mood, and so was the party.

Members knew that for the first time in years what happened at the conference was of national, and even international, significance. Those attending included representatives from Israel and the Palestinian territories.

Falconer says: "It was absolutely electrifying. By the time we get to 1996, the world is absolutely focused on Labour. Everybody assumes - except Tony Blair - that we're going to win the election. Foreign dignitaries are coming to kiss his ring."

Blair's speech, with its soundbites of "Labour's coming home" and "education, education, education" were rapturously received in the hall and elsewhere, and the party received a modest bump in the polls afterwards. It was time for the final push.

The 1997 election got off to the perfect start for Blair. At 11.30am on 17 March, John Major went to Buckingham Palace to ask the Queen to dissolve parliament before the election. Hours later, the Sun's printing presses cranked into action emblazoned with a now famous headline: The Sun Backs Blair. Blair and his aides were delighted. They had been working for years to secure the backing of the Murdoch press.

Campbell admits: "I didn't feel terribly comfortable about some of the things we had to do to keep the Murdoch press broadly on board. But I remember Tony saying that if you've got a dog in the corner, and you're worried it might have rabies, you want to keep it in the corner."

The Sun's front page set the tone for much of the campaign to come. Everywhere Labour campaigners went, they were greeted with euphoria.

"It was absolutely phenomenal," says Harriet Harman, who was the shadow social security secretary. "All you had to do is put on a Labour rosette, get off a train at some station at what was regarded as a marginal seat, and people would come up to you in the street and say, 'we're voting for Tony Blair'."

Nevertheless, nobody foresaw the scale of the victory to come. Harman recalls flying down to campaign for Candy Atherton, a candidate in Cornwall, along with several other MPs.

"We sat on the plane and suddenly there was terrible turbulence and we were tossed around," she says. "There were about 12 Labour MPs on it. We were like, God, this was not such a good idea. If this plane goes down, we could lose our majority."

To the relief of Labour officials, 1 May 1997 began with warm and dry weather: ideal for maximising turnout. However, the queues that built outside polling stations during the day indicated something bigger was happening.

"People were out in droves queueing to vote," says Harman. "One person came rushing up to me and said: 'How do I vote for Tony Blair?' And I said: 'Well, actually, you vote for Tony Blair by putting your cross against Harriet Harman.'"

Blair himself was holed up in Myrobella House, his large constituency home outside Sedgefield, for much of the day. Campbell, who had stayed the previous night, remembers realising that morning they were on the brink of something historic.

"John Burton, Tony's constituency agent arrived, and he came in and turned the radio on, and it was tuned to Radio 4 - the Today programme," Campbell says. "I said: 'God, John, I can't listen to this stuff any more.' I started twiddling the knobs to try to find the music station. And I found that local music station, and they were playing Abba, Winner Takes It All. And I turned to John and said: 'I think we've won.'"

Nothing was clear, however, until 10pm, when the BBC broadcast the results of its exit poll. "Tony Blair is to be prime minister and a landslide is likely," David Dimbleby told the nation.

As the results began to come in, party officials were astonished by the seats they were winning.

Mandelson, having won his seat of Hartlepool, flew down to London with the writer Robert Harris in a small plane hired by the Sunday Times, for whom Harris was writing a feature. The plane flew low enough for the pair to pick up Radio 4 so they could listen to the results coming in.

"As we flew down the spine of England, we had seats dropping like ninepins into Labour's lap on our left and our right," he says. "We were in the east Midlands, we were in the West Midlands, we were going down towards the home counties, we went to north London. It was unbelievable the number of seats [we won], many of which had never featured on any target list I had been playing around with."

'Going through my diaries, it's a form of PTSD reliving all the different rows that we had, most of which I'd forgotten'



Alastair Campbell
Press secretary

Even as it became clear they had won a landslide victory, party aides were still sweating over the details. Blair was due to open a speech at the Royal Festival Hall in the morning with the line: "A new dawn has broken." But what if the weather was bad and no one could see the dawn breaking? "Just as we got to the Festival Hall, the sun comes out," says Miliband. "It was amazing - pretty special."

Nobody involved in today's Labour party expects a repeat of 1997's scenes.

Starmer believes the public has grown tired of politicians with grand visions, and would rather elect someone managerial who can reduce the drama in British politics. And he acknowledges the economic backdrop to this election means that much of what the party did in 1997 is no longer possible.

"The mood in 97 was one of optimism," he told the BBC's Nick Robinson last week. "The economy was growing, our services, public services weren't on their knees and we were turning into a new century, which always gives this sort of human sense of hope.

"It chimed with the times, but it wouldn't now. And it's a big mistake to misread the mood of the country at the moment."

Many of those close to Blair believe Starmer is in danger of offering Blair's reassurance but without the radical policy platform that came with it. Some argue today's economic insecurity is a reason to be bolder with policy proposals, not more timid.

Miliband says: "You have to reboot the economic, social and political bargain, which is really the challenge that the country faces now."

Campbell says: "Starmer has done an amazing job to get from where Labour were in 2019, where the argument was, 'can Labour ever win again?' to the argument now being, 'how can Labour lose this?' But at the same time, I sometimes worry that along with the paranoia that we had, we also had alongside it an absolute determination to be making the weather all the time."

He adds: "A defensive crouch is fine as a defensive crouch to pull the pins out of the hand grenades, to make sure the campaign is run on your terms. But then it's, 'right, what are those terms, what are those things you want to drive your campaign?' And that's the bit I think Labour need to do more on, not less."

Mice study suggests pregnancy permanently rewires the brain

Hannah Devlin
Science correspondent

Pregnancy leads to a permanent rewiring of neurons, according to research that gives new insights into so-called "baby brain".

The research, in mice, revealed that their parenting instincts are triggered by changes in the brain that occur in response to oestrogen and progesterone late in pregnancy. Similar changes are likely to occur in the human brain, according to scientists, who said the work could pave the way for fresh understanding into parenting behaviour and postpartum mental health.

Dr Jonny Kohl, who led the research at the Francis Crick Institute in London, said: "We know that the female body changes during pregnancy to prepare for bringing up young. One example is the production of milk, which starts long before giving birth. Our research shows that such preparations are taking place in the brain too."

The findings are consistent with brain imaging research in women showing changes to brain volume and brain activity that endure long after pregnancy, although Kohl pointed out: "Parenting is obviously a lot more complex in humans."

He added: "We have NCT classes, observational learning, all these environmental influences. We don't have to rely on those hormonal changes to such a degree."

Female mice undergo a dramatic shift in behaviour, with virgin females showing no interest in pups and mouse mothers spending most of their time looking after young. Previously it had been widely assumed that the onset of this behaviour occurred during or just after birth, possibly triggered by hormones such as oxytocin. However, the latest research puts the change at an earlier stage and also suggests that the changes may be permanent.

The scientists used miniature devices attached to the heads of the mice to record directly from a population of neurons in the hypothalamus, which had already been linked to parenting behaviours.

Brain recordings showed oestrogen reduced the baseline activity of these neurons but made them more excitable in response to incoming signals. Progesterone rewired their inputs, causing the formation of more synapses so that these neurons were more densely connected to other parts of the brain – and these changes appeared to be permanent.

"We think that these changes, often referred to as 'baby brain', cause a change in priority – virgin mice focus on mating, so don't need to respond to other females' pups, whereas mothers need to perform robust parental behaviour to ensure pup survival," said Kohl. "What's fascinating is that this switch doesn't happen at birth – the brain is preparing much earlier."

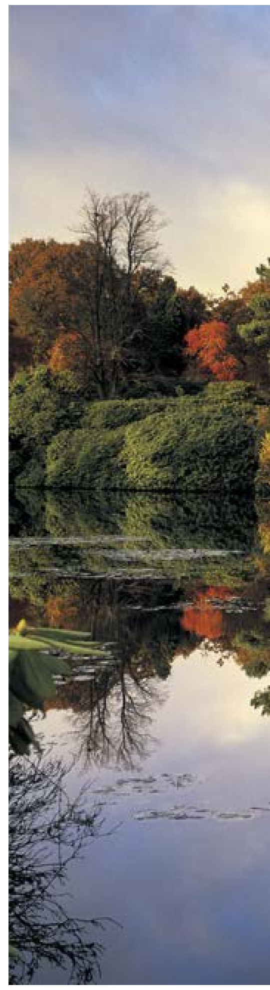
> **'We think that these changes, known as "baby brain", cause a change in priority'**
>
> **Dr Jonny Kohl**
> *Lead researcher*

When the mice were engineered so that the neurons were insensitive to the hormones, they showed no switch to parental behaviour even after giving birth, suggesting there is a critical window in late pregnancy when these hormones take effect.

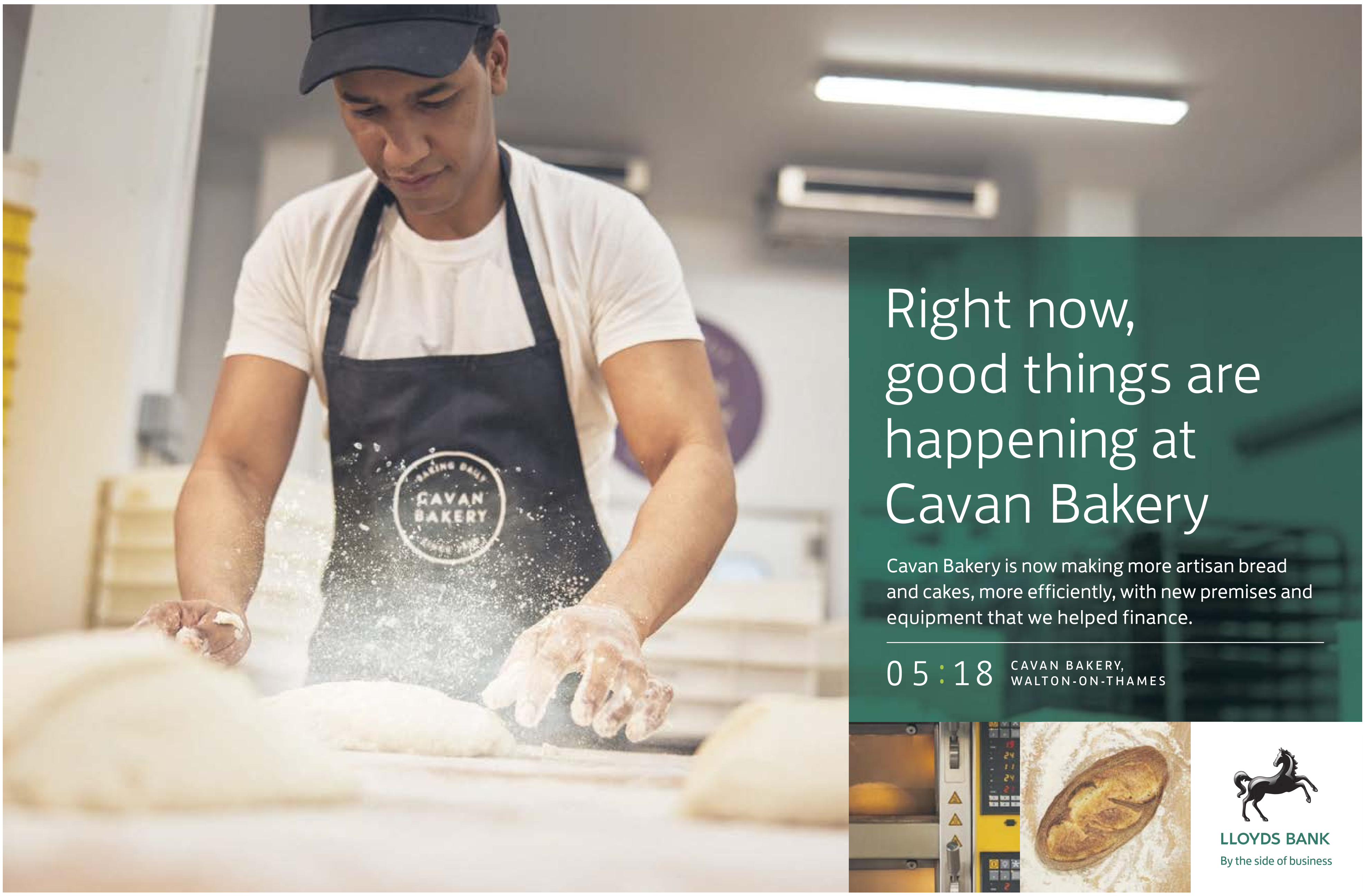
In humans, hormonal changes are not the only, or even necessarily the primary, influence on parenting behaviour. But understanding the changes taking place in the brain could provide new insights into the influences on parental bonding and conditions including postpartum depression and psychosis.

Prof Robert Froemke of NYU Langone, who was not involved in the research, said: "There's still so much we don't understand about parenting and hormone signalling in the body and brain – these results are a solid step in that direction. Parenting is among the most complex and difficult set of behaviours we and other animals engage in, and there's not a lot of room for trial and error, especially in the earliest days."

He added: "The hormonal changes documented here seem to help prime the parental brain to respond to infant needs right out of the gate."



▶ *Beautiful autumn tints reflected in the Middle Lake at Sheffield Park, East Sussex, a National Trust garden*
PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW BUTLER/ NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES





Rainy summer brings forecast of bright colours for the autumn

Steven Morris

After a disappointing season last year when the wrong sort of weather at the wrong time made the autumnal colours in the UK's parks, gardens and woodlands duller than usual, this month and November are expected to be bright.

Nature lovers can look forward to particularly dazzling displays of reds, ambers, butter yellows and russet browns this autumn, said the National Trust. The wet summer has meant trees have not been under the stress of the droughts of 2022.

Andy Jasper, head of gardens and parklands at the National Trust, predicted that the UK was about to be wrapped in a "warm blanket" of beautiful colours.

"This year's summer weather has helped buck the trend of recent dry ones, so our plants and trees finally had a chance to hydrate and are now gearing up for a dazzling show," he said. Jasper added that the autumn spectacle was likely to start in Scotland, where temperatures typically drop the fastest, followed by the north of England and Northern Ireland, with a domino effect down the rest of England and Wales through to the south-west.

Glendurgan in Cornwall, the National Trust's most southerly garden, can seem like an autumnal New England valley when the conditions are right.

John Lanyon, Glendurgan's head gardener, said: "We have really high hopes for a spectacular autumn display, which will make up for last year's poor season. In 2022 the lack of rain and high temperatures put our trees under huge stress before we experienced strong gales that blew the leaves off before they had a chance to turn."

Tom Hill, a tree and woodlands adviser for south-east England, said he was hoping for the first "normal autumn" in a while. "Our gardens and woodlands in the south-east are very much at the coalface of climate change in this country. The older trees that we care for in London are particularly vulnerable to suffering from prolonged droughts."

Luke Barley, the trust's national trees and woodland adviser, said the charity was identifying trees with stress caused by years of drought and increasingly warm winters.



Representative Example	Duration of Agreement	Upfront Cost	Monthly Device Payment	Credit Amount	Total Amount Payable	Interest Rate Fixed	Representative APR	Device Cash Price (to buy Outright)	Airtime Plan today - March 2024	Airtime Plan April 2024 – March 2025	Airtime Plan April 2025 – March 2026
iPhone 15 Pro 128GB	36 months	£30	£19.83	£713.88	£743.88	0%	0%	£743.88	£30.99	£30.99 + RPI% announced in Feb 2024 + 3.9% = Price A	Price A + RPI% announced in Feb 2025 +3.9%

***Each year your Airtime Plan will be increased by the Retail Price Index (RPI) rate of inflation announced in February plus 3.9%. If RPI is negative, we'll only apply the 3.9%. You'll see this increase on your April 2024 bill onwards. See o2.co.uk/prices.**
£19.83 Device Plan for 36 months & £30.99 monthly rolling Airtime Plan. £30 upfront. Purchase directly from O2 & save up to £9.16 a month on the device plan when you trade in an iPhone. Total £50.82 per month achieved by trading in an iPhone & receiving up to £330.00 trade in value, over 36 months. Quoted savings and trade in values may change if the trade-in condition and/or model differs from the submitted description. Terms apply, see https://www.o2.co.uk/termsandconditions/mobile/o2-recycle. 5G available in selected areas. 5G device, sim & tariff required. See o2.co.uk/coveragechecker for coverage. O2 Refresh custom plans: Direct purchases only. You need a monthly rolling Airtime Plan as long as you have a Device Plan. Pay off your Device Plan at any time & you can choose to keep your Airtime Plan, upgrade or leave. If your Airtime Plan ends you will need to pay your Device Plan in full. 0% APR. Finance subject to status & credit checks. 18+. Direct Debit. Credit provided by Telefónica UK Ltd, SL1 4DX. Telefónica UK is authorised & regulated by the FCA for consumer credit & insurance. O2 Switch Up: O2 Switch Up cannot be used with the first 90 days from purchase. New & upgrading customers (not previously on O2 Switch Up as part of a Plus Plan) on select O2 plans only. Eligible customers may swap their existing handset device (tablets etc are excluded) during the eligible period of their contract. If approved, we will keep your device & pay off your existing contract before you get your new device. If refused, you will need to upgrade via our standard methods & early upgrade charges may apply. All requests must be processed via our retail stores, unless we agree otherwise. Customers may only take out a new Custom Plan or Plus Plan following a successful swap. Custom Plans & Plus Plans are subject to availability, status, credit checks & payment by direct debit. New contract price may be higher than existing depending on plans chosen. Customers will not be eligible to redeem any O2 Recycle offers when using O2 Switch Up. Bolt On is subject to the standard terms & conditions of service & is only for your personal non-commercial use. For full terms, see: https://www.o2.co.uk/termsandconditions/mobile/o2-switch-up.

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Jon Fosse, Norwegian author with an 'incredible mind', awarded Nobel prize

Ella Creamer

The Nobel prize in literature has been awarded to the 64-year-old Norwegian author Jon Fosse "for his innovative plays and prose, which give voice to the unsayable". His works include the Septology series of novels, Aliss at the Fire, Melancholy and A Shining.

"His huge oeuvre, spanning a variety of genres, comprises about 40 plays and a wealth of novels, poetry collections, essays, children's books and translations," said Anders Olsson, chairman of the Nobel committee for literature. "Fosse blends a rootedness in the language and nature of his Norwegian background with artistic techniques in the wake of modernism."

"I am overwhelmed, and somewhat frightened. I see this as an award to the literature that first and foremost aims to be literature, without other considerations," Fosse said in a statement.

He also told the Norwegian public broadcaster NRK that he was "surprised but also not" to have won. "I've been part of the discussion for 10 years and have more and less tentatively prepared myself that this could happen," he said.

Jacques Testard, Fosse's fiction publisher, said on hearing the news: "He is an exceptional writer, who has managed to find a totally unique way of writing fiction. As his Norwegian editor Cecilie Seiness put it recently in an interview: if you open any book by Jon and read a couple of lines, it couldn't be written by anyone else.

"His fiction is incantatory, mystical, and rooted in the landscape of the western fjords where he grew up. It's very important to remember that he writes in Nynorsk or New Norwegian, a minority language in Norway, a political act in itself. He's an exceptional playwright and poet. He's an incredible mind, and it couldn't have happened to a nicer person."

Born in 1959 in Haugesund on the west coast of Norway, Fosse grew up in Strandebarm. Aged seven, he nearly died in an accident, which he said was "the most important experience" of his childhood and one that "created" him as an artist. In his adolescence, he aspired to be a rock guitarist, before turning his ambitions to writing.

His debut novel, Raudt, svart (Red, Black), was published in 1983. His first play to be performed, Og aldri skal vi skiljast (And Never Shall We Part), was staged at the National Theatre in Bergen in 1994. Yet, the first play he wrote, Nokon kjem til å komme (Someone is Going to Come), would lead to his breakthrough in 1999 when the French director Claude Régy staged it in Nanterre.

Fosse went on to become the most-performed Norwegian playwright after Henrik Ibsen. He has written more than 30 plays, including Namnet (The Name), Vinter (Winter) and Ein sommars dag (A Summer's Day). His longer works include the Septology trilogy, the third volume of which was shortlisted for the international Booker prize in 2022.



▲ *Jon Fosse wanted to be a guitarist before he became a writer. Below, a scene from one of his 30 plays*
PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID LEVENE/THE GUARDIAN



Septology, which Fosse started during a pause from playwriting and after converting to Catholicism in 2013, is about an ageing painter, Asle, living alone on the south-west coast of Norway and reflecting on his life. There in Bjørgvin lives another Asle, who is also a painter but struggles with alcohol. The doppelgangers are consumed by the same existential questions about death, faith and love.

'He is an exceptional writer with a unique way of writing fiction'

Jacques Testard
Fitzcarraldo Editions

In 1989, the same year that Fosse's novel Naustet ("Boathouse") came out, he taught his fellow Norwegian author Karl Ove Knausgård at the Academy of Writing in Hordaland. "Fosse's voice is unmistakable in whatever he writes, " wrote Knausgård in 2019.

Fosse's English translator, Damion Searls, said he was "thrilled" the author's work would find a wider audience. "I first brought Fosse's fiction into English almost 20 years ago. I read Melancholy in German and immediately felt that the work was brilliant and needed to be translated."

Fosse's British publisher is Fitzcarraldo Editions, which also publishes Annie Ernaux, winner of the prize in 2022. Fosse's win marks the independent publisher's third in recent years: Olga Tokarczuk was made laureate in 2018.

Extract The Other Name: Septology opening words

And I see myself standing and looking at the picture with the two lines that cross in the middle, one purple line, one brown line, it's a painting wider than it is high and I see that I've painted the lines slowly, the paint is thick, two long wide lines, and they've dripped, where the brown line and purple line cross the colours blend beautifully and drip and I'm thinking this isn't a picture but suddenly the picture is the way it's supposed to be, it's done, there's nothing more to do on it, I think, it's time to put it away, I don't want to stand here at the easel any more, I don't want to look at it any more, I think, and I think today's Monday and I think I have to put this picture away with the other ones I'm working on but am not done with, the canvases on stretchers leaning against the wall between the bed-room door and the hall door under the hook with the brown leather shoulderbag on it, the bag where I keep my sketch-pad and pencil, and then I look at the two stacks of finished paintings propped against the wall next to the kitchen door, I already have ten or so big paintings finished plus four or five small ones, something like that, fourteen paintings in all in two stacks next to each other by the kitchen door, since I'm about to have a show, most of the paintings are approximately square, as they put it, I think, but sometimes I also paint long narrow ones and the one with the two lines crossing is noticeably oblong, as they put it, but I don't want to put this one into the show because I don't like it much, maybe all things considered it's not really a painting, just two lines, or maybe I want to keep it for myself and not sell it? I like to keep my best pictures, not sell them, and maybe this is one of them, even though I don't like it? yes, maybe I do want to hold on to it even if you might say it's a failed painting?

Metro Bank shares tumble as it prepares to raise funds

Kalyeena Makortoff
Banking correspondent

Metro Bank shares plunged by a quarter as the high street lender sought to sell off billions of pounds-worth of mortgages, or tap investors for more cash, in an effort to shore up its balance sheet. The bank, which was founded by Vernon Hill, a US billionaire, in 2010, issued a stock market statement yesterday, confirming that it was considering a "range of options" that would remove barriers to further lending and growth.

Shares dropped by as much as 30% at one point before easing slightly to close down 25%, their biggest one-day fall since 2019.

Options include asking investors to help refinance £350m-worth of debt before it comes up for refinancing in 2025. However, it could also involve raising millions of pounds through the sale of debt, shares or assets.

£350m
The debt that Metro must refinance in 2025, which could involve asking investors to help or selling assets

Assets sales are likely to include a portion of its mortgage book.

Metro's team – which includes bankers at Morgan Stanley – have reportedly started to approach rivals including Lloyds and NatWest about buying £3bn worth of its home loans. Metro, Lloyds and NatWest all declined to comment.

"No decision has been made on whether to proceed with any of these options," Metro Bank said.

In late 2020 the bank sold a portfolio of owner-occupied residential home loans worth about £3bn to NatWest. While Metro is still operating within the regulator's limits, it is doing so within a buffer, meaning it will need to raise more cash from investors to grow the business.

Metro has said it expected its next quarterly trading update to show "continued momentum in personal and business current account growth and customer acquisition, in line with expectations". It added: "Metro Bank continues to be well positioned for future growth."

The lender holds about £15.5bn-worth of deposits.



Spectator columnist given suspended jail term for rape attempt

Emine Sinmaz
Switzerland

The journalist Taki Theodoracopulos was given a 12-month suspended prison sentence by a Swiss judge yesterday for an attempted rape in 2009.

The 87-year-old, who writes a column for the Spectator, was convicted of attacking a woman on a ski weekend at his chalet in Gstaad in the Swiss Alps. During a nine-hour hearing at Oberland regional court in Thun yesterday, Theodoracopulos dismissed the accusations as "monstrous" and a plot to destroy his career, saying he was "absolutely not guilty".

The victim, who cannot be named, told the court: "I felt like a piece of meat. I didn't feel that he saw me as a person at all. I tried very hard to put the incident behind me but it really shook my confidence professionally and it has had ongoing emotional consequences."

The woman said that another journalist had invited her to Theodoracopulos's chalet, dubbed Palataki or Little Palace, in early 2009.

The victim explained why she had waited a decade to report the attack, having first made a complaint to the Metropolitan police in 2019. "I didn't think anyone would believe me. The accused was, is, a wealthy and powerful man. I thought everyone would think I was lying and I was trying to make my way in [my career]," she said. "But, also, I felt ashamed. I thought I shouldn't have accepted the invitation, I shouldn't have gone, and that if I tried to say something everyone would say it was my own fault."

In his sentencing remarks, the judge, Martin Blatter, said her statements were credible and that she had no motive to make a false accusation. He also said the plot described by Theodoracopulos made no sense. He ordered the Greek-born writer to pay court costs and compensation. His lawyer indicated he would appeal against the verdict.


▲ *Taki Theodoracopulos dismissed the accusations as 'monstrous'*

The victim told how the writer's inappropriate behaviour had started shortly after her arrival at the chalet, where she shared a room with another woman. She said: "While we were in the shower the accused came into the room. He stared at us while we were naked and made unpleasant remarks, but at the time we just thought he was being ridiculous."

The woman told how the writer had tried to kiss her that evening, saying: "I tried to brush him off as discreetly as possible, it was embarrassing, but I didn't feel threatened or frightened at all." She sobbed as she began detailing the attempted rape hours later. The woman said her roommate had left so she was alone in bed when Theodoracopulos came in.

She said: "He came towards the bed and started kissing me again. Again, I wasn't frightened, I just thought he was being silly, and then he pushed me down on the bed and he was saying to me: 'I want to fuck you. Come on, I want to fuck you.'…

"It was very physical. I was really frightened because he was a very strong man, an athlete, and I thought it would be easy if I just let him do it so he didn't hurt me. But I kept on pushing him away from me and eventually he stopped and I told him in a quiet voice to leave the room."

The next morning, she told a woman on the trip that Theodoracopulos had come into her room. The victim recalled: "[She] said to me: 'Did you get the letter? They always get the letter.'…So I went back to the bedroom and it was lying on the floor as though it had been pushed under the door." She said she found a letter written by Theodoracopulos which referred to the fact that she had rejected him.

Theodoracopulos said the woman had made the claims in response to an article he had written about the #MeToo movement. He said: "The plaintiff obviously openly admitted in the original accusation of me that she remembered all this stuff that never happened when she read something I'd written making fun of #MeToo. [She] said her memory was triggered – a rather well used phrase."

National Theatre Wales warns of closure in six months

Chris Wiegand

National Theatre Wales says that it will be forced to close in six months' time after its multiyear funding was withdrawn by the Arts Council of Wales.

The company, Wales's English-language national theatre, which has received Arts Council of Wales (ACW) funding since it was established 15 years ago, issued an open call for a conversation with the council on Wednesday after lodging an appeal. The cut is part of ACW's 2023 investment review, in which it announced National Theatre Wales (NTW) would be one of nine organisations in its arts portfolio that would not be offered multiyear funding from 2024-25 but could apply to its other funds.

NTW said it was "deeply shocked" to have received news that its revenue funding would cease in spring.

In a letter, NTW's artistic director, Lorne Campbell, and its co-chairs, Sharon Gilburd and Yvonne Connikie, say that the decision will mean Wales will "lose one of its largest employers of theatre-makers".

They add: "We employed 645 people last year alone. This decision will jeopardise the skills and career development of our finest actors, directors, writers, designers and production staff. Many of those we've supported now sit at the helm of the organisations that ACW funds."

The letter goes on to warn: "If this funding decision stands, Wales will lose National Theatre Wales in six months' time. If lost, it will not be easily or affordably replaced."

Theatres across Wales that are funded by the ACW would find themselves with fewer shows to stage if NTW closed, it adds.

An ACW spokesperson acknowledged receipt of the letter and said it was "happy to meet with National Theatre Wales to discuss matters requiring clarification and options moving forward" but that it would not be commenting, "to protect the integrity of the appeals process". It added: "This is consistent with our approach to other organisations in a similar position."



▲ *Austin Butler plays smouldering badass Benny, who is a member of the Vandals biker club* PHOTOGRAPH: KYLE KAPLAN/20TH CENTURY STUDIOS

Film review

Biker tale of love and gang life in the 1960s

The Bikeriders
BFI London film festival
★★★★★

Peter Bradshaw

Jeff Nichols' motorcycle movie is about a love triangle and a succession crisis – inspired by the immersive 1968 study of Chicago bikers by photojournalist Danny Lyon, whose black-and-white pictures flash up with the closing credits. This film opens up the storytelling throttle with a throaty growl, delivering the doomy romance of an old-fashioned western and the thrills of a mob drama.

The Bikeriders is set in a world in which the increasingly careworn gang leader competes for the affection of his toughest follower with this man's girlfriend, while grooming him as his heir. Yet the biker king can be challenged for the crown by any subordinate according to the rules of his own violence-democracy, the incumbent gruffly asking: fists or knives?

Tom Hardy is Johnny, truck-driver, family man and founder of the 60s Chicago motorbike club the Vandals, inspired by the epiphany of watching Marlon Brando in The Wild Ones on TV. The film's whole approach in laying out Johnny's life circumstances is to imagine an answer to Brando's famous reply to being asked what he's rebelling against: what do you got?

But the toughest, sexiest and most smoulderingly badass is Benny, played by Austin Butler, the only one of the Vandals who directly takes on the law and whose violent altercation with civilian locals results in a gruesome injury that Johnny must avenge – leading to his gang's mutation into a quasi-crime mob, attracting wannabe joiners from all over the country.

Benny is in love with Kathy, played by Jodie Comer with tough pugnacity and a north-western accent with which you could slice a chrome tailpipe. She is in effect the narrator, speaking to Lyon, played by Mike Faust. It is Kathy who can see the ritual absurdity of the Vandals' codes of masculinity – how, having affected to despise rules, they set up a club with a huge number of rules, followed with pedantic solemnity. Unlike the heroes of Dennis Hopper's Easy Rider, the bikeriders have no quest. They drift around, assemble for "picnics" in green spaces they churn into mud during races and get into fights with other gangs with whom they later have beers.

The performances aren't subtle exactly – with Comer's twang, Butler's soft purr and Hardy's Brandoesque drawl – but there's such enormous potency and impact in everything they do onscreen.



Doctors wrote wills in 2020, BMA official tells Covid inquiry

Amelia Hill

Doctors started writing their wills and making sure their life insurance was up to date when the pandemic began in 2020 because they understood "what was coming", the Covid inquiry heard yesterday.

Giving evidence to the inquiry, Prof Philip Banfield, from the British Medical Association, said: "We had no doubt that we were facing something that was completely unprecedented."

Banfield also said that after 2022, the medical profession needed "to undergo a kind of grief debrief. It was very clear that the profession was traumatised not only from within itself but from what didn't seem happening for its patients."

Banfield criticised the government's actions during the pandemic on a number of grounds, including:

- Their failure to include an official, strong, independent public health presence on the public stage.
- Their slowness in introducing face masks. "Policies like face masks were based on a political narrative rather than a public health narrative, specifically economic and other factors that lay outside public health," he said.
- The decision to shift away from contact tracing on 12 March 2020.
- The consequences of "eat out to help out", which drove up Covid infections by between 8% and 17%.
- The "chopping and changing" of the tier three structure, which limited people to restrictions including only staying overnight with those in one's household or support bubble and working from home where possible.

'Policies like face masks were based on a political narrative'

Prof Philip Banfield
BMA

Banfield also flagged the lack of PPE. "We had stories very early on about not being able to have PPE," he said. "There were a lack of aprons and visors. A number of us had to have our local schools 3D-printing visors for us. A number of people had to source masks themselves."

James Nazroo, professor of sociology at the University of Manchester and co-director of the Manchester Institute for Collaborative Research on Ageing, said ministers should have been clear what the impact of the pandemic on residents in care homes would be because of a paper published in 2017. The paper, co-written by Jonathan Van-Tam, the deputy chief medical officer during the pandemic, warned of the dangers to those in long-term care.

The paper said the impact could be "explosive", with care home workers likely to spread the disease unknowingly, if they were moving between homes while being asymptomatic, and carelessly, if they had symptoms but couldn't afford to take sick leave. At the time the article was published, Van Tam was a professor of public health at Nottingham University.

The paper was, Nazroo agreed, "prophetic. The paper explains the risks very clearly. First of all, he was flagging the basic vulnerability of nursing and care home occupants to a flu-like virus on account of their own frailty and their close living arrangements."



Cut and dried Florist Helen Strickland tends to dried flowers and foliage, used for bouquets, weddings and decorations, at her business in Sherborne, Dorset. Instagram is driving a dried flower revival.

PHOTOGRAPH: ZACHARY CULPIN/BNPS

Green party leaders to lay out ambitious election goals

Peter Walker
Deputy political editor

The Green party is gathering for its annual conference with a headline pledge for a mass programme of insulating every home that needs it - and an ambitious target of winning four seats at the next election.

The conference of the Green party of England and Wales in Brighton is likely to be the final pre-election gathering for an organisation that has become an increasingly effective local campaigning force, gaining more than 400 councillors since 2019, and full control of its first council.

Under the first past the post electoral system, the Greens have only ever won a single parliamentary seat, Brighton Pavilion, and with the departure of Caroline Lucas as an MP the party faces a renewed challenge there from Labour.

But in their speech to the conference today, co-leaders Carla Denyer and Adrian Ramsay will set out a target of not just keeping the Brighton seat but winning three more.

Amid what the party says is more support from former Labour voters disgruntled by Keir Starmer's policies on the climate and other areas, a key offering will be a £145bn investment over 10 years to retrofit homes.

The so-called Fairer, Greener Homes Guarantee would cover grants to insulate homes, with the offer of low-interest government-backed loans for those who did not qualify for a grant. These would be linked to the property, not the owner, and would be gradually paid off via savings from reduced energy bills.

£145bn
Sum the Green party is pledging to invest in a mass programme of insulating every home that needs it

Tenants would be able to request that their landlord applied for a loan to do the work. If they refused, the local council could take out the loan and do the work instead.

A change in the usual timetable for party conferences means the Greens will meet just before Labour. Denyer said one aim would be to reinforce the party's message that Starmer's Labour was too unambitious.

"To be honest with you, voters are already saying that to us on the doorstep," she said. "They're saying things like: 'I used to vote Labour, but I'm really disappointed at the direction Keir Starmer is taking the party.'"

Denyer is among the four would-be MPs in Green target seats. She will take on Thangam Debbonaire, the shadow culture secretary, in the new seat of Bristol Central, part of the redrawn map of parliamentary constituencies.



Building companies save billions from Tory delays to low-carbon regulations

Fiona Harvey
Environment editor

Housebuilders and property developers have benefited by billions of pounds from delays to low-carbon building regulations in the past eight years of Tory rule, when the sector became one of the biggest sources of donations to the Conservative party.

The delays mean that homeowners and taxpayers will have to pay tens of billions of pounds to bring newly built homes up to low-carbon standards, and have resulted in years of unnecessarily high greenhouse gas emissions and higher energy bills for residents.

At least 10% of donations received by the Conservative party since 2010 came from property developers, real estate tycoons and others connected with the construction industry, exclusive Guardian analysis shows.

The government is to implement fresh delays to green regulations, after the prime minister, Rishi Sunak, announced a rollback of net zero policies last month that will benefit housebuilders still further.

The Guardian found housebuilders, developers and real estate tycoons donated almost £40m to the Tories since 2010, when their coalition with the Lib Dems took office.



10%

Proportion of donations received by the Tory party since 2010 that came from the construction industry

PHOTOGRAPH: DOMINIC LIPINSKI/BLOOMBERG/GETTY

The construction sector – including some companies that are not Tory party donors – has saved at least £15bn since 2015 by building homes to old, high-carbon standards, without solar panels and batteries, heat pumps and effective insulation.

The cost of remedying these omissions in order to reach the UK's target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, if left to individual homeowners or taxpayers, would reach £45bn, according to the analysis.

Since 2015, the Conservative government has made several decisions that saved money for housebuilders while running counter to the UK's green targets. These include refusing to require new homes to be built with heat pumps or solar panels, delaying insulation regulations and attempting to scrap regulations that would force housebuilders to clean up polluted watercourses.

Opposition parties called the findings a scandal. Helen Morgan, the communities and local government spokesperson for the Liberal Democrats, said: "The Conservatives have proven time and again that they cannot be trusted with protecting our environment. They have bent over backwards for their developer donors and delayed vital measures to cut bills."

Caroline Lucas, the Green party MP, said: "Just as the government slashes vital environmental regulations and kicks low-carbon building measures into the long grass, tens of millions of pounds find their way into Tory coffers. This vicious cycle will destroy nature and frustrate progress on the climate emergency when it's needed more than ever."

Building a new home to low-carbon standards is cheaper than retrofitting it. Green experts approached by the Guardian estimated the building cost for installing items such as air source heat pumps, solar panels and batteries, and insulation, would be about £8,500. However, for a householder to retrofit a dwelling to the same standards would cost about £33,000.

The cost difference is because developers can integrate the technologies into the building design and fabric during its construction, while also benefiting from economies of scale.

In 2015, soon after the Conservatives won the general election, the government scrapped regulations that would have forced the construction sector to ensure all new homes were low carbon. Since then, about 1.5m new homes have been built, the vast majority of which would not meet such standards.

A Guardian analysis of Electoral Commission data found the Conservative party had received £27.1m in donations from real estate, construction and development companies since 2010.

The party received a further £11.2m from individuals who sit on the boards of property companies or have large real estate interests. Separately, Tory MPs received more than £850,000 in gifts and donations from companies and individuals connected to the construction industry in the same period.

The £39m in party and MP donations to the Tories from property interests is 13 times the £2.7m donated to the Labour party or its MPs in the same period: £2.3m from property companies, £401,000 from individuals and £271,000 to its MPs.

This £39m includes more than £2m in the past 18 months: the party received £1.9m in donations from property companies and £567,000 from individuals with links to them.

Countywide Developments – of which the property developer Tony Gallagher is director – has given £4.3m to the Conservative party since 2010, including £385,000 since January 2022.

John Bloor has donated £3.1m to the party since 2010 through his various companies.

Other companies that have donated large amounts include Bridgemere UK, which provides development finance for UK housebuilders and developers, and has donated £1.6m to the Conservatives since 2019. Thakeham Homes has donated £966,440 since 2017, £250,000 of it in 2022.

A Conservative party spokesperson said: "The prime minister has set out a practical route to achieving net zero that does not clobber households with higher rents and bills. We are still committed to meeting our net zero target by 2050."

A government spokesperson said: "The future homes standard will deliver homes that are net zero ready. In 2021 we introduced an improvement in energy efficiency standards, meaning new homes being built now already produce significantly lower carbon emissions and have excellent levels of insulation. We are also supporting homeowners to get ready for net zero through a number of schemes, including the new Great British insulation scheme."

A spokesperson from Bloor Homes said neither John Bloor, nor any representatives of the company, had held meetings with ministers or civil servants in the past three years, and the company had not asked the government to delay green regulations on new homes.

Countywide, through Gallagher Developments, did not respond to a request for comment.

Bridgemere said: "Bridgemere has made several donations to the Conservative party but none over the last 18 months as it has become increasingly frustrated by the government's total lack of progress on urgently required planning reforms."

A spokesperson for Thakeham said: "Thakeham consistently pushes for higher environmental and sustainability standards in housebuilding and never for a reduction or delay in meeting our environmental obligations as we build the homes and communities needed."



The Conservatives have delayed the introduction of higher standards on insulation and heating

PHOTOGRAPH: MARCIN ROGOZINSKI/ALAMY

Man who took crossbow 'to kill the queen' jailed for nine years

Rachel Hall
Nadeem Badshah

A man who broke into Windsor Castle with a crossbow to try to kill the queen has been sentenced to nine years in jail with a further five years on extended licence.



Jaswant Singh Chail

Jaswant Singh Chail, 21, climbed into the castle grounds with the weapon on Christmas Day 2021 and later declared: "I'm here to kill the queen.".

Wearing dark clothes and a metal mask to emulate the Star Wars villains of whom he was a fan, Chail sent a video to family and friends on WhatsApp apologising for what he was about to do.

In the clip, Chail, who is of Sikh Indian heritage, said he was seeking revenge for the Amritsar massacre in 1919, when British troops shot dead up to 1,500 Indians. He decided to break into the castle after his attempts to get close to the royal family by joining the armed forces had failed in late 2021, the court was told.

Chail admitted to the court that he had made a threat to kill the Queen and had been in possession of a loaded crossbow. He said he had been encouraged to kill by an artificial intelligence chatbot "girlfriend" called Sarai.

At the last hearing, Alison Morgan KC, for the prosecution, said Chail's crimes were so serious they should attract the highest sentence – a maximum of seven years for treason. Chail, from Southampton will also be subject to a hybrid order under the Mental Health Act, meaning he will remain in a psychiatric hospital but will be transferred to custody after receiving treatment.

Mr Justice Hilliard, passing sentence, said: "The defendant harboured homicidal thoughts which he acted on before he became psychotic. His intention was not just to harm or alarm the sovereign but to kill her."

Additional reporting **PA Media**





PHOTOGRAPH: HENRY NICHOLLS/AFP/GETTY

▲ *Artist Ben Wilson paints over discarded chewing gum on the bridge*

Millennium Bridge in London to close for repair work

Mabel Banfield-Nwachi

The Millennium Bridge in London will be closed for three weeks for urgent maintenance work after parts of its underside started to degrade.

The suspension footbridge, also known colloquially as the "wobbly" bridge, crosses the Thames and links St Paul's Cathedral in the City of London with the Tate Modern gallery on the South Bank.

It will close to pedestrians from 8am on Saturday 14 October while workers replace the synthetic membrane that separates the bridge's steel structure from its aluminium bridge surface, or deck.

Giles Shilson, the chair of the City Bridge Foundation, said the bridge was beginning to deteriorate as a result of years of wear and tear, and that damage to the layer under the bridge's surface needed to be fixed.

"We're sorry for any inconvenience but hope people will understand we do need to do this work, and will see the benefits after we give the bridge a much-needed deep clean that will leave it looking as good as new."

Meanwhile, an artist who paints tiny pictures on discarded chewing gum on the bridge has pleaded for his works to be saved after being told most of them will be removed from as part of engineering work.

Ben Wilson, nicknamed "the chewing gum man", has been painting on pieces of chewing gum trodden into the bridge since 2013.

Wilson, whose work on old chewing gum has featured across Europe, said he was devastated that years of work would be destroyed. "I've been working on this bridge since 2013, transforming rubbish into art. I'm quite literally taking what is thrown away and spat out and turning it into a piece of artwork," he said.

A foundation spokesperson said: "We will work with Ben to identify which pieces are kept. We feel this strikes the right balance between keeping the bridge looking spick and span and allowing people to continue to enjoy some of the artwork Ben has created on the bridge."

The 325-metre-long (1,066ft) bridge is one of five owned and maintained by the City Bridge Foundation.

It is planned the bridge will reopen to the public on Sunday 5 November at the latest. Work will take place 24 hours a day.

The bridge was closed shortly after it first opened in 2000 because of unexpected swaying and vibration problems as large numbers of people crossed it. The bridge was fitted with shock-absorbing dampers to reduce its lateral movement to a safe level, before reopening in 2002.



2002

Year when the bridge reopened. It was closed shortly after opening in 2000 because of unexpected swaying

'We're a family ripped apart'

Couple grieving for daughter call for rethink on transgender care



▲ *Caroline Litman, left, with her daughter Alice at the age of 18*

Libby Brooks

Sitting together in the light-filled living room of their family home in Surrey, Caroline and Peter Litman finish one another's sentences, as can happen after 28 years of marriage. "We're not the most well informed," says Peter, 57, who wears a small trans ally pin on his T-shirt. "We make mistakes and don't always use the right words," says Caroline, 56.

Peter adds: "But what we hope we can do to help the trans community is humanise the debate. This is just an ordinary family, a coherent, loving, family that's been ripped apart."

His wife explains: "Not because Alice was transgender, but because of the reaction to her being trans."

Their youngest daughter, Alice Litman, was 20 and living in Brighton with a close friend when she died on 26 May 2022. The couple say they believe firmly that their daughter's struggles to access timely mental health intervention and gender-affirming care contributed significantly to her death.

Next week a coroner will deliver her written conclusions regarding Alice's death. She has stated that the evidence before her suggests healthcare provision for transgender people is "underfunded and insufficiently resourced for the level of need the society we live in now presents".

In Caroline's witness statement for the inquest, where the family were supported by the Good Law Project, her fury and frustration radiate off the pages as she describes the repeated minimising and dismissal she encountered. "It was an immense battle to get her taken seriously," she says now.

The pair say it was a complete surprise when their youngest child – a dancer and rugby player, who wanted to be like "that cool science guy [Einstein]" when she grew up – told them she was questioning her gender identity.

The family were aware that something was troubling the 16-year-old: she was increasingly anxious and her school attendance had suffered. Caroline recalls asking her: "Are you in some sort of trouble, has someone asked you to do something illegal, are you being bullied? But I didn't ask her if she was transgender. It's something I'm a bit ashamed of."

Caroline worked as an NHS psychiatrist for 12 years, quitting the profession more than 10 years ago, partly because she



> ***'I asked Alice – are you in trouble, are you being bullied? But I didn't ask her if she was transgender'***
>
> **Caroline Litman**
> *Mother of Alice*

was demoralised by the "sticking plaster" nature of her job. It was a background, she freely admits, that had presented her with a particular view of gender dysphoria as a psychiatric disorder. "We were taught stories of people who wanted to cut off body parts as they didn't feel they belonged to them, and that these people were deluded and psychotic."

Her immediate anxiety was what surgery Alice might seek, and Peter worried about his daughter losing her fertility. "But who knows what choices she would have made if she'd had the right treatment at the right time?" he says.

Instead, they found themselves relentlessly advocating for their increasingly depressed and isolated daughter, who was finding her experience of being "in the wrong body" torturous as puberty advanced and she found there was no immediate prospect of specialist care or the hormone intervention she desperately wanted.

The waiting list for the youth service at the NHS Gender Identity Development Service provided by the Tavistock Clinic was 24 months when Alice joined it in 2019, a year after she first discussed her gender identity with a GP.

Although that controversial service has since been shut down, with an independent review recommending the creation of regional hubs, there were still 7,560 people under the age of 18 on the waiting list as of last May.

Following her referral, Alice began to socially transition, and the family hosted a tea party to celebrate. Caroline remembers her daughter beaming and skipping around the kitchen.

But soon Alice's sense of hopelessness at the looming wait for treatment returned. She was transferred to the Tavistock's adult gender identity clinic when she turned 18, but was still waiting for an initial assessment when she died. The adult service has a waiting list of more than 13,000 people, the inquest heard, with an estimated five-year wait.

In desperation, the family sought private treatment, but Alice was unhappy with the prescription she then received. Their experience with child and adolescent mental health services was just as difficult, they say. Caroline recalls leaving early meetings "with the feeling the diagnosis was bad parenting". There was the GP who suggested Alice played more football, and the nurse who blamed her low mood on "lifestyle choices".

Alice tried to kill herself twice in 2019, then, three months after the second attempt, was "suddenly cast out of care", as Caroline puts it, and discharged from mental health services altogether after she turned 18 years old.

Regardless of the inquest outcome, the family – Alice had two older siblings, Kate, 26, and Harvey, 25 – want to add their voices to calls for systemic change.

"The gender identity clinic needs to be completely overhauled," says Caroline, "but no amount of money or specialists is going to reduce a waiting list of that length. Without proper planning they can't just keep doing more of the same. The only realistic way we see to reduce the waiting list quickly is through primary care."

Peter suggests that GPs need proper guidelines to assist them in supporting, and if necessary prescribing hormone treatment to, transgender patients. "That's what most developed countries do, what most transgender people want."

The couple are painfully aware of the toxic public discourse that has developed around transgender issues. "She told us she didn't deserve to live," says Caroline. "She didn't specifically say it's because 'people hate me', but that must have preyed on her mind."

Alice attended the Pride in London parade in 2019 but had no desire to be an activist, says her father. "She just wanted to be left alone, to be allowed to live the way she wanted to."

The couple stay clear of social media, but Kate, who posts online about the family's campaign, has described being "flooded with hateful comments" during the inquest. "You're afraid of what people are prepared to say to you about the death of your daughter," says Caroline. "You don't have to point out my failings as a mother. I feel guilty every single day that I wasn't able to save her."

Despite her struggles, Alice sustained close relationships with school friends. "They are the loveliest bunch, they've helped us know her better," says Caroline.

Alice loved to play the fantasy role-play game Dungeons and Dragons. "We used to hear her upstairs getting so emotional about it, squealing and roaring and getting cross," Caroline recalls. But she adds: "I'm sad now, because we weren't really interested and I wish I'd paid a bit more attention."

Speaking about their daughter, the couple are constantly triaging one another's grief. "You did listen to her," Peter whispers to his wife, placing a hand on her knee.

"We had a very close relationship," he adds. "We were very able to articulate how much we loved each other. I have a lot of regrets, but we're very confident that Alice knew she was loved."



Caroline and Peter Litman say that their transgender daughter, Alice, was depressed as attempts to get access to gender affirming care failed. Left, an album created for the couple by friends of Alice

PHOTOGRAPHS: TERI PENGILLEY/ THE GUARDIAN

Driver was 'slumped' before school bus crash, says coroner

PA Media

A coach crash that left two people dead and others seriously injured happened after the driver suffered an "event" at the wheel and the vehicle overturned on the motorway, a coroner's court heard yesterday..

Jessica Baker, 15, suffered "instantaneous" death from "catastrophic" head injuries in the crash on the northbound M53 at Hooton, Wirral, last Friday. Stephen Shrimpton, 40, who also died in the accident, was driving the coach, taking pupils to two schools, West Kirby grammar and Calday Grange grammar.

André Rebello, senior coroner for Liverpool and the Wirral, said yesterday that CCTV footage from inside the coach showed Shrimpton slump to his left while driving the vehicle, which at the same time left the carriageway and went up an embankment before ending up on its side.

Jessica, from Chester, was one of about 50 passengers on the bus. She was in year 11 at West Kirby school.



▲ *Jessica Baker, a year 11 pupil, and Stephen Shrimpton, the driver of the school bus, died in the accident on the M53 last Friday*

Rebello, who said it was "miraculous" no one else was killed, opened and adjourned the inquests into the two deaths. He said further medical examinations would be needed to establish Shrimpton's cause of death, with the focus on the examination of the condition of his heart.

Four other children were taken to hospital, including a 14-year-old boy whose injuries were said to be "life-changing". A further 13 were treated for minor injuries.

A full inquest will be heard on 20 March next year.



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Hadrian's Wall suffered damage from felling of Sycamore Gap tree

Mark Brown
North of England correspondent

Hadrian's Wall sustained damage during the felling of one of Britain's most-loved trees, a preliminary inspection by Historic England has revealed.

The heritage body said it had not yet been able to carry out a full investigation but an early look had shown there was "some damage" to the wall.

The 300-year-old Sycamore Gap tree in Northumberland was regarded by many as part of the DNA of north-east England. Its felling last week prompted an outpouring of sadness mixed with anger at the senselessness of the vandalism.

Kim McGuinness, the police and crime commissioner for Northumbria, said it was like "stealing joy".

The tree was next to Hadrian's Wall and photographs show that it landed on the wall during the felling.

Historic England said: "We visited Sycamore Gap on Friday for a preliminary inspection. Whilst we identified that Hadrian's Wall has sustained some damage, we have not been able to access the site to carry out a full investigation so a further archaeological appraisal will take place once the site is considered safe.

"As the government's heritage adviser, we are involved because Hadrian's Wall is protected as a scheduled monument. We appreciate how strongly people feel about the loss of the tree, and its impact on this special historic landscape, and will continue to work closely with key partners as this progresses."

Northumbria police arrested a 16-year-old boy and a man in his 60s on suspicion of criminal damage after the attack. Both have been released on bail pending further inquiries.

Sycamore Gap is a landmark known around the world, a place where countless marriage proposals have been made and ashes spread. The Northumberland national park authority said it was the most photographed spot in the whole park.

The act of vandalism is seen as much more than the toppling of a single tree. The landscape writer and poet Robert Macfarlane said it symbolised a wider attack on nature. "I just see this as part of a piece with a much broader hostile environment towards the living world in this country," he told the BBC.

The tree was looked after by the park authority and the National Trust, the landowner. The trust said it had been overwhelmed with thousands of messages of support and 150 offers of help.

As the police inquiry continues, another pressing question is what should happen to the site. Many people would like to see a new tree planted, while others have suggested a replica, a memorial, a work of art or even doing nothing for a few years to see if the stump sprouts new shoots.

▼ *Historic England said it had not yet carried out a full investigation but there had been 'some damage'*
PHOTOGRAPH: MARK PINDER/THE GUARDIAN



Nine rapes at Harrogate military training college reported to police in 13 months

Dan Sabbagh
Defence and security editor

Nine rapes at Harrogate military college, which trains 16- and 17-year-olds for careers in the British army, were reported to civilian police over a 13-month period to the middle of August.

The figures, disclosed under freedom of information legislation, have raised questions about safeguarding at Harrogate, and why its welfare arrangements are rated as outstanding by Ofsted.

North Yorkshire's police and crime commissioner said that "13 sexual offences" at the Army Foundation College were reported between 22 July 2022 and 17 August 2023, including nine reports of rape, two of sexual assault and two of voyeurism.

No details were given as to whether they led to investigations or prosecutions, or the gender of the victims. It follows a string of reports of rape, abuse and harassment across the UK military, with the majority of the victims women and girls. This week it emerged that a 19-year-old Royal Artillery gunner, Jaysley Beck, was believed to have killed herself at Larkhill camp in Wiltshire after a period of relentless sexual harassment from one of her superiors.

During 2021, military police recorded 22 victims of sexual offences based at Harrogate.

David Gee, an adviser with Child Rights International Network (Crin), which asked for the latest rape figures,

'On this record Harrogate cannot be regarded as safe'

David Gee
Child rights group

said he believed "on this record Harrogate cannot be regarded as safe". He said that however it structured its welfare arrangements, difficulties were exacerbated by the young age of the recruits.

Gee said: "This is not a British problem. This is a problem all over the world when young people are recruited to the military. It is not something you can solve by imposing a zero-tolerance policy and hope it will go away."

Britain is the only country in Europe that recruits children aged 16 and 17 to its armed forces. Those who sign up are trained at the Army Foundation College.

The Ministry of Defence has long defended its recruitment policy. A government defence minister said in May the college's welfare was improving. Annabel Goldie told the Lords that having learned from "earlier appalling incidents", the training camp had "introduced important changes".

Lady Goldie highlighted that Ofsted, the schools inspectorate, rated Harrogate as "outstanding in all areas". The MoD, she said, had "a zero-tolerance policy for sexual offences" and sexual relationships between recruits and trainers.

Nevertheless, she said: "None of Ofsted's reports in that past 10 years has mentioned anything about recruit abuse. Whenever we send data to Ofsted and give them the sources, they say it is not relevant to our inspections."

A letter sent by Ofsted in June 2022 to Crin from its deputy director, Paul Joyce, said any new allegations of abuse should be directed towards the police, the army and the local children's safeguarding board.

The army said it was committed to rooting out all forms of inappropriate behaviour. A spokesperson added: "We have very strong safeguarding mechanisms at the Army Foundation College" and "multiple methods of accessing welfare support, including confidential support lines". Ofsted was contacted for comment.

Rape Crisis offers support for rape and sexual abuse on 0808 802 9999 in England and Wales, 0808 801 0302 in Scotland, and 0800 0246 991 in Northern Ireland

Picasso's ode to stolen time with mistress and muse expected to fetch £100m

Harriet Sherwood
Arts and culture correspondent

The time appears to be 7.25, and the year is definitely 1932. Pablo Picasso has painted a portrait - one of many - of his "golden muse" and secret lover, Marie-Thérèse Walter.

It is one of only three major works by the artist to feature a watch, although Picasso was fascinated by timepieces and owned several beautiful and expensive examples.

The portrait, *Femme à la montre*, will be on display in London for the first time for five days from tomorrow, before it is auctioned by Sotheby's next month. It has an estimate in excess of $120m (£99m).

Picasso painted it during his explosive "year of wonders" as he prepared for his first large-scale retrospective in Paris at the age of 50.

He had been intimately involved with Walter for several years, a relationship that started when the artist, then 45, spotted the 17-year-old through the window of Galeries Lafayette in Paris. She inspired paintings, drawings and sculptures, some of which are considered the greatest from his eight-decade career.

Painted in vivid colours, it shows a seated Walter in profile, a watch with a simple face and bright yellow strap on her wrist. "Picasso is all about passion, but this specific passion [for watches] is one not generally known about," said Simon Shaw, Sotheby's vice-chair for global fine arts.



◀ *Picasso painted the portrait during his 'year of wonders' as he prepared for his first big retrospective in Paris*
PHOTOGRAPH: WALEED ZEIN/ANADOLU/GETTY

"He was an incredibly stylish man, very interested in his sartorial identity. And a great connoisseur of watches. Even photos of him wearing his watches are prized by watch collectors."

In the portrait, Walter is depicted as an "enthroned Madonna", said Shaw. By 1932 she had been Picasso's lover for five years, their relationship concealed from his wife, Olga. "I think the watch relates to their stolen time together - although by now she was an open secret."

The portrait was bought by Emily Fisher Landau, one of the greatest art collectors of the 20th century, in 1968. She hung it above the mantelpiece in the living room of her New York apartment. By the time she died, aged 102, this year, her art collection could have filled several museums.

Fisher Landau began collecting art in earnest after a burglar made off with diamonds, emeralds, rubies and sapphires that had been gifts from her husband. Instead of replacing the jewellery, she decided to use the substantial insurance payout to buy paintings and sculptures by Mark Rothko, Franz Kline, Henri Matisse, Georgia O'Keeffe, Piet Mondrian, Paul Klee and others. Andy Warhol painted her portrait.

"She was a tremendously important cultural figure, a real pacemaker for contemporary art in America," said Shaw. After her death, her daughter, Candia Fisher, pledged hundreds of works to the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

About 120 artworks are to be sold at Sotheby's in New York on 8 November in an auction that could make up to £500m. The portrait is a "tremendously desirable, very special" painting, said Shaw. Even so, it is unlikely to break Picasso's record of almost $180m achieved in 2015 for *Les femmes d'Alger (Version 'O')*.

Femme à la montre will be on display at Sotheby's, London, 7-11 October

Eyewitness

Dresses to impress
Images of performers at Madame Arthur, the oldest trans and drag cabaret club in Paris. Having opened in 1946, it was forced to close in 2010 but was revived five years later, adopting the revue's classic format of burlesque performers singing French hits live.
PHOTOGRAPHS: JOEL SAGET/AFP/GETTY





◀ A view of the dressing room at Madame Arthur, where two shows take place each night



▼ *Members of the cabaret troupe at Madame Arthur, which took its name from a 19th-century song when it opened soon after the war*



▼ *A receptionist in the foyer at Madame Arthur, which is said to be growing in popularity as a nightspot for young Parisians*







▲ *Maud'Amour, one of the club's performers, on stage during a show. Songs are always sung live, and always in French*

▲ *Performer Grand Soir applying makeup before going onstage at the club*



◀ *Odile De Mainville puts the finishing touches to her look backstage*



◀ *Grand Soir and Diamanda Callas (back row) performing with Odile De Mainville and Maud'Amour (front row)*

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World

Russia accused of 'terrorism' after missile kills 51 in busy village cafe

Luke Harding *Odesa*
Pjotr Sauer

The Ukrainian president accused Russia of "genocidal aggression" after a missile hit a crowded rural cafe yesterday, killing at least 51 people including a six-year-old boy.

Volodymyr Zelenskiy said rescuers were searching for survivors at the scene. The attack took place at 1.15pm in the village of Hroza, in the Kupiansk district of the north-eastern Kharkiv province.

He described it on Telegram as "a demonstrably brutal Russian crime - a rocket attack on an ordinary grocery store, a completely deliberate act of terrorism. My condolences to all those who have lost loved ones."

Ukraine's minister of internal affairs, Ihor Klymenko, said on Telegram the death toll stood at 51 and that "debris analysis is ongoing".

Ukrainian forces recaptured the village last year as part of a sweeping counteroffensive in Kharkiv oblast. It is situated more than 25 miles from the frontline, where there has been fierce fighting around the town of Kupiansk and in nearby forests.

Video footage from Hroza showed bodies laid out on the grass and rescue workers picking over a landscape of rubble. The cafe had been completely obliterated.

According to preliminary findings, the Russians targeted the cafe with an Iskander ballistic missile, Klymenko said. About 60 people were in the cafe at the time, he added.

They had gathered for a memorial lunch for a villager who had recently died, Klymenko told Ukrainian TV. About 10% of the village's population of 500 were killed in the attack.

It was the worst single death toll in Kharkiv province, which has been repeatedly bombarded since last year's full-scale invasion by Russia, officials said.

Zelenskiy said the latest strike showed "Russian terror must be stopped. All those who help Russia circumvent sanctions are criminals. Everyone who supports Russia until now supports evil."

The Ukrainian government was talking to European leaders about further boosting the country's air defences, said Zelenskiy, who is attending a conference in Spain. "We will answer the terrorists. Absolutely fair. And powerfully," he said.

Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Zelenskiy, said the strike was an "insidious Russian attack that has no military logic". He said the "whole civilised world" had to defeat "Putin's evil", adding: "This is not just a metaphor or figure of speech."

Hours after the strike, Vladimir Putin stepped up his nuclear rhetoric, saying Russia had successfully tested the nuclear-powered, nuclear-capable Burevestnik strategic cruise missile and had almost completed work on its nuclear-capable Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missile.

"In the event of an attack on Russia, no one has any chance of survival," the Russian president said.

Putin also yesterday made his first comments on the cause of the plane crash that killed the Wagner mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin, claiming that hand grenades had detonated inside the aircraft. "Fragments of hand grenades were found in the bodies of those killed in the crash," Putin told a thinktank meeting in the Black Sea resort of Sochi.

"There was no external impact on the plane," Putin said, contradicting reports by western intelligence services that said a bomb was the likely reason behind the crash. Putin also implied that alcohol and drugs could have played a role in the crash.



◀ *Police carry bodies out of a destroyed shop and cafe in the village of Hroza*
PHOTOGRAPH: ANATOLII STEPANOV/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



'Invincibility shattered' Black Sea turned into a no-go zone for Moscow's warships



Luke Harding
Odesa

It turned into a moment of humiliation for Moscow. The headquarters of Russia's Black Sea fleet - a building of elegant white columns overlooking the Crimean port of Sevastopol - was ablaze. Smoke billowed into a blue sky. First one, and then a second Storm Shadow missile slammed into its roof. Video captured the impact: a precise, deadly, thunderous strike.

The attack on 22 September killed 34 officers, including Viktor Sokolov, the fleet's commander, according to Ukraine. Russia denied this, releasing footage of Sokolov suggesting he was still alive. Whatever the truth of the admiral's fate, the blow deep into enemy territory was of major significance. It was further proof that after 19 months, Vladimir Putin's full-scale invasion had not gone to plan.

On land, Kyiv's counteroffensive has made slow progress. Ukrainian troops have run into formidable Russian obstacles. But on water, it is a success story. Largely unnoticed Ukraine has reclaimed the Black Sea at least in part, by turning it into a no-go zone for Russia's warships - no mean feat given that Ukraine has no navy to speak of, and a handful of old jets.

In Sevastopol, a naval exodus has occurred. Two frigates and three attack submarines have left port and moved east to the safer Russian harbour of Novorossiysk, according to satellite data. Five large landing ships, a patrol boat, and small missile vessels have joined them there. A cluster of other boats have sailed from Sevastopol to Feodosia, a port on Crimea's eastern side.

Driven from Sevastopol, Russia has reportedly signed a deal for a new naval base. It will be located in the breakaway Georgian region of Abkhazia, further along the Black Sea coast. Yesterday the region's leader, Aslan Bzhania, said the permanent facility would be built in the "near future". "This is all aimed at increasing the level of defence capability of Russia and Abkhazia," he told the Izvestia newspaper.

Speaking this week, James Heappey, the UK armed forces minister, said Russia's Black Sea fleet had suffered a "functional defeat". He told the Warsaw security forum: "It has been forced to disperse to ports from which it cannot have an effect on Ukraine." The liberation of Ukraine's waters was "every bit as important" as

Niger coup
France to begin pulling out troops
Page 28

Low point
Mont Blanc shrinks by two metres
Page 29







▲ *Volodymyr Zelenskiy, the Ukrainian president, visits Snake Island, a strategic area taken by Russia on the first day of its invasion*
PHOTOGRAPH: REUTERS

◀ *A Ukrainian shipping firm's premises left damaged this summer in a drone strike by Russian forces in Izmail, in the Odesa region*
PHOTOGRAPH: NINA LIASHENKO/REUTERS

the counteroffensive last year in Kharkiv oblast, during which Kyiv regained territory, Heappey added.

According to Ukraine's former defence minister Oleksii Reznikov, drones have been vital to winning back the Black Sea. Reznikov likened the boom in indigenous drone production to the early days of Silicon Valley in the US. "This war is the last conventional land one. The wars of the future will be hi-tech. The Black Sea is like a polygon. We're seeing serious combat testing," he said.

Reznikov said Ukraine was making an array of uncrewed aerial vehicles, as well as drones that travelled on sea and underwater. There was "competition" between rival outfits - Ukraine's navy, special forces, GUR and SBU intelligence agencies - as to who made the best drone. "We have no serious fleet or naval capability. But we can hit them with drones."

Andriy Zagorodnyuk, Reznikov's predecessor as defence minister, said Kyiv had pioneered a new form of warfare. It cost $10,000-$100,000 (£8,300-£82,600) to build a sea drone filled with explosives. Released in "swarms" they targeted Russian ships costing hundreds of millions of dollars.

"It's an extremely asymmetric way of fighting enemy boats. This is true of cost and time. You can't build a new ship quickly," he said.

After annexing Crimea in 2014 the Kremlin became the Black Sea's dominant power. It declared large areas off limits to Ukrainian ships including much of the Sea of Azov, around the port of Mariupol.

On the first day of the invasion, Moscow bombarded and occupied Snake Island, a strategic territory near the Danube estuary. Russian troops swept into the southern city of Kherson, practically unopposed, and besieged nearby Mykolaiv.

From spring 2022, however, Ukraine fought back. It thwarted a Russian amphibious landing in Odesa, Ukraine's biggest and most strategic Black Sea port. That April Kyiv sank the Moskva, Russia's flagship carrier, using two Neptune cruise missiles. In June Russia was forced to leave Snake Island.

These setbacks led Russia to agree a "grain corridor", brokered by Turkey and the UN, in which merchant ships departed and arrived in Odesa and two other ports. Ukraine's forces, meanwhile, stepped up long-range attacks.

Slowly but surely Russian naval vessels found themselves squeezed. Reznikov said last autumn he discussed the provision of gamechanging Storm Shadow missiles with Ben Wallace, then the UK's defence minister.

Recently, Ukraine pummelled Russian bases in Crimea. It knocked out at least two S-400 air defence systems and a radar station. In September Ukrainian special forces seized gas-drilling rigs west of Crimea. Next, a missile slammed into Sevastopol's shipyard damaging a Russian landing ship and submarine. It was the first time since 1945 that Moscow had lost a submarine in combat. Days later Kyiv hit the Black Sea fleet HQ.

Zagorodnyuk said: "They've run away." Ukrainian officials are more cautious. Dmytro Pletenchuk, the spokesperson for Ukraine's navy, said Kyiv had achieved a "technical knock-down". He stressed it was too early to write off Russia. "We are talking about a powerful grouping," he said. Moscow had 30 warships, many smaller boats, and coastal vessels guarding the Kerch bridge. Five carrier ships and five Kilo-class submarines were able to unleash Kalibr cruise missiles on Ukrainian cities, he said.

On Wednesday, British intelligence said Russia was planning to sabotage the new humanitarian grain corridor, through which more than 30 ships have moved to and from Odesa and other ports. The Russian plan was to use its submarines to put sea mines in the middle of the channel.

Nevertheless, Ukraine is now relatively free to manoeuvre in the Black Sea. And security experts say that winning back Crimea is essential to Ukraine's victory and its progress on land.

"The idea of Russian invincibility in the Black Sea has been shattered," said Yevgeniya Gaber, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council. "There has been a cognitive shift." Ukraine's allies were helping, she said.

It was unlikely British naval warships would patrol the Black Sea, a plan that was suggested on Sunday by the UK defence secretary, Grant Shapps. But, said Gaber, the UK was helping in other ways, such as with reconnaissance and drone technology.

Ukrainian observers now dream of a new Treaty of Paris - the 1856 deal that ended the Crimean war and led to Russia's diminishing influence in the region, after its defeat by the British, French and Ottoman empires. The treaty prohibited Russia from putting a navy in Sevastopol. "This war must end the same way, with the Black Sea fleet sunk and Russia banned by international law from building a new one," Zagorodnyuk said.



◀ *A Russian ship, thought to be the Olenegorsky Gornyak, being hit by a drone near the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk in August*

More than 100 people die in drone strike on Syrian military academy

Reuters
Beirut

More than 100 people were killed in an attack on a military academy in Syria yesterday, according to a war monitor and an official, as weaponised drones bombed the site minutes after Syria's defence minister had left a graduation ceremony there.

It was one of the bloodiest attacks ever against a Syrian army installation, and unprecedented in its use of weaponised drones in a country that has endured 12 years of civil war.

Civilians and military personnel were killed in the attack on the military academy in the central province of Homs, Syria's defence ministry said in a statement, adding that "terrorist" groups had used drones to carry it out.

The statement did not name an organisation and no group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Syria's defence and foreign ministries vowed in written statements to respond with "full force" to the attack. Syrian government forces have carried out heavy bombing attacks on the opposition-held zone of Idlib.

Syria's defence minister attended the graduation ceremony but left minutes before the attack, according to a Syrian security source and a security source in the regional alliance backing the Damascus government against opposition groups.

"After the ceremony, people went down to the courtyard and the explosives hit. We don't know where it came from, and corpses littered the ground," said a Syrian man who had helped set up decorations at the academy for the occasion.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that more than 100 people had been killed and 125 injured.

The source in the alliance backing Syria's government said the toll was about 100.

Syria's conflict began with protests against the president, Bashar al-Assad, in 2011 but spiralled into an all-out war that has left hundreds of thousands dead and millions of people displaced.

The Syrian army has been gutted by the fighting, and relies heavily on military support from Russia and Iran, as well as Tehran-backed fighters from Lebanon, Iraq and other countries.

Assad has regained most of the country, but a swathe in the north bordering Turkey is still held by armed opposition groups, including hardline jihadist fighters.

France to begin pulling troops out of Niger this week in blow to struggle against jihadists



French soldiers patrol a rural area in northern Burkina Faso, along the border with Mali and Niger in 2019
PHOTOGRAPH: MICHELE CATTANI

Angelique Chrisafis

France will begin withdrawing troops from Niger this week after a coup in the west African country, in what marks a turning point in western nations' efforts to counter a decade-long Islamist insurgency in the Sahel region.

"We will begin our disengagement operation this week, in good order, safely and in coordination with the Nigeriens," the French military headquarters said.

The logistics operation to move 1,500 French troops and large amounts of military equipment out of Niger by the end of this year comes a week after the French ambassador left Niger under pressure from the new military regime, which ousted the pro-French president, Mohamed Bazoum, on 26 July.

The French president, Emmanuel Macron, said on 24 September that France would pull out troops because it would not be "held hostage by putschists".

The former colonial power in Niger continues to support Bazoum, and officials in Paris said it was not possible to continue joint operations with Nigerien forces against insurgents when putschists were running the country. Macron has called the junta "the allies of disorder".

French troops have been in Niger as part of a wider fight against jihadists across the Sahel region, with Paris at the forefront of operations against Islamist insurgents in the region for a decade.

The withdrawing troops now face the organisational challenge of a rapid retreat. They would need military cover to leave their exposed forward positions, the military headquarters said, possibly including air support from a larger force at an airbase outside the capital, Niamey.

French troops in Niger have been living with uncertainty since the junta began demanding they leave, with irregular food supplies and repeated anti-French protests outside the Niamey base.

Pulling out leaves a hole in western efforts to counter an Islamist insurgency in the region and deals a blow to French influence that could allow Russia to expand its sway in the area. Until the coup, Niger had been the west's last key ally in the central Sahel region south of the Sahara.

The coup is seen as the latest serious threat to French strategy in the Sahel, after several military coups in other countries had forced Paris to rethink its military presence and anti-jihadist mission.

France first deployed troops against jihadists in Mali in 2013 but in the past three years several military coups in the region, as well as a continued jihadist presence, have exposed the limitations of the military strategy and forced France to scale back its presence and focus its efforts in Niger, with Bazoum as a firm ally.

In Mali a coup in 2020 led to a diplomatic standoff with France, which withdrew its troops last year. France also quit Burkina Faso after two coups last year brought in a junta that adopted a nationalist line.

Both countries are former French colonies, where for years French troops had worked with the authorities to counter jihadists.

Last month, Macron said he was "very worried" about the region, saying that jihadist attacks were causing dozens of deaths a day in Mali and such assaults had resumed in Niger.

In February, he announced that France would reduce and reorganise its military footprint in Africa. He has promised to break away from its former postcolonial policies and criticised the "crimes of European colonisation". After the African independence movements in the 1950s and 60s, France still intervened regularly in the domestic affairs of its former colonies and for decades retained sway through business and political ties under an unofficial policy known as "Françafrique".

Additional reporting **Agence France-Presse and Reuters**



Supporters of Niger's coup leaders protest near a French military base on the outskirts of Niamey in August
PHOTOGRAPH: AFP/GETTY IMAGES



'We will begin our disengagement in coordination with the Nigeriens'

French military HQ
On withdrawing troops

At least 14 killed and 120 missing after lake overflows in India

Hannah Ellis-Petersen
Delhi



Flood waters submerge buildings and vehicles in the town of Rangpo

At least 14 people have been killed and 102 are missing in the north-east Indian state of Sikkim after heavy rain caused a glacial lake to burst its banks, triggering flash floods down a mountain valley.

The disaster, which took place on Wednesday, has affected more than 22,000 people, according to the authorities, and 22 army personnel are among the missing. It has also left more than 3,000 tourists stranded after the floods washed away the main highways and bridges.

The catastrophic overflow of South Lhonak lake took place after five times the normal amount of rain fell on the state during a cloudburst, causing a dam to partially collapse in the Teesta valley, close to the border with China.

Video footage showed the muddy flood waters surging into built-up areas, causing houses to collapse and submerging army bases.

"The search operations are being undertaken under conditions of incessant rains, fast-flowing water in Teesta River, roads and bridges washed away at many places," a defence spokesperson said on the X social media platform, formerly known as Twitter.

Authorities warned the rescue operation would be challenging as more rain was forecast in coming days and mobile and land lines continued to be down.

The incident is the latest extreme weather event to take place in the fragile Himalayan mountain region in south Asia, which is heavily affected by the climate crisis and has recently been hit by excessive and unseasonable rainfall, flooding and landslides.

About 250 people died in the mountainous state of Himachal Pradesh during the monsoon after unprecedented rains washed away swathes of roads and caused catastrophic landslides.

"Sadly, this is the latest in a series of deadly flash floods that ricocheted across the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region this monsoon, bringing the reality of this region's extreme vulnerability to climate change all too vividly alive," said Pema Gyamtsho, the director general of the Nepal-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development.

Call for release of full footage of girl's encounter with Tehran hijab police

Patrick Wintour

Iranian opposition figures have demanded the release of complete CCTV footage of an incident in which a 16-year-old girl, now in a coma, collapsed after a claimed encounter with hijab police on the Tehran metro.

Armita Geravand remains in hospital following the incident on Sunday. Authorities have released footage that they say substantiates their claim that Armita fainted owing to a drop in blood pressure, but rights groups abroad allege that she fell during a confrontation with agents because she was not wearing the hijab.

CCTV footage shared by the state news agency IRNA showed Armita without a hijab accompanied by two female friends walking towards the train from the metro platform. Upon entering the cabin, one of the girls is seen immediately backing off and reaching for the ground, before another girl is dragged unconscious from the cabin by passengers.

State news has carried no footage from inside the train itself and offered no explanation on why it had not been released. Most train cars on the Tehran metro have multiple CCTV cameras that are viewable by security personnel. Opposition figures say the clock on the footage showed at least 100 seconds missing.

The human rights group Hengaw said Armita's mother, Shahin Ahmadi, had been arrested on Wednesday and her whereabouts were unknown. The claim could not be verified, but if Ahmadi has been detained it would



▲ *Armita Geravand remains in hospital in a coma after the incident*

suggest that authorities fear she did not believe the official narrative of what happened to her daughter.

In an interview broadcast on Tuesday, Ahmadi said her daughter had collapsed as a result of a fall in her blood pressure, but activists said they feared her testimony had been staged.

Rights groups fear that Armita might face the same fate as Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman whose death in a coma last year in the custody of morality police prompted months of nationwide protest. In another echo of the Amini case, a journalist from the Shargh newspaper who tried to investigate the incident was briefly detained.

Narges Mohammadi, a women's rights activist serving a 10-year jail sentence in Evin prison in Tehran, said on Instagram that the "government's behaviour shows its desperate attempt to prevent the truth … from being revealed".

The case has begun to draw international attention, including from the German foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock, who tweeted: "Once again a young woman in #Iran is fighting for her life. Just because she showed her hair on the subway. It's unbearable."

Iran has returned its morality police to the street in recent months, and as lawmakers seek even stricter penalties for those flouting the law on required head covering.

Nasser Kanani, a spokesperson for the Iranian foreign ministry, described western countries' concern about the situation of Iranian women "interventionist, biased and dishonest".

Iran's few remaining independent newspapers, under ever heavier censorship, have not reported extensively on what happened, but Etemaad, a reformist newspaper, challenged the government to explain why reporters were being prevented from carrying out their constitutional duty to seek the truth.

A trade union for teachers said in a statement on Wednesday that the ministry of education's security director had visited Armita's school and threatened her teachers. "He emphasised that sharing any news or photos of Armita Geravand on social media by her teachers would result in heavy fines and the immediate termination of their contracts," it said.

Mont Blanc has shrunk by 2.2 metres since 2021, say experts

Peter Beaumont



◀ *Surveyors say Mont Blanc has lost 3,500 cubic metres of ice and snow since 2021, with strong winds likely to have played a significant role*

PHOTOGRAPH: PHILIPPE DESMAZES/ AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Mont Blanc, the tallest mountain in the Alps, has shrunk by 2.2 metres (7ft 3in) since 2021 to its lowest height in recent memory.

The mountain peak, which is capped by a ridge of ice, was measured by a team of surveyors from the Haute-Savoie regional administration, aided by a drone.

The results, which were published yesterday, suggest the new official height of Mont Blanc is 4,805.59 metres. The previous reading, taken two years ago, recorded the summit at 4,807.81 metres, which was in turn almost a metre less than the measurement taken in 2017.

Describing 2023 as a "somewhat exceptional year", one of the surveyors involved, Denis Borel, told the French television channel TF1 that the mountain had lost "3,500 cubic metres of ice and snow compared with the volume measured in 2021, representing roughly the volume of an Olympic swimming pool". Borel said the loss was "quite considerable compared with the measurements of previous eras".

Climate and glaciology experts cautioned against linking the shrinking of Mont Blanc's summit to the loss of glacial ice cover in the Alps.

"Even if we see that there is a slight downward trend – around 15 to 20cm since 2001 – of this snowy summit of Mont Blanc, climatologists and glaciologists tell us that it takes approximately 50 years of measurement to be able to draw conclusions on possible global warming at this altitude of 4,800 metres", said Borel.

Ice cover at the summit of Europe tended to experience variation depending on wind and the precipitation, he added.

4,805.59

The current height in metres of Mont Blanc's summit, which was measured at 4,807.81 in 2021

"This is not representative of global climate warming because the climatic conditions at the summit of Mont Blanc are rather polar," said Luc Moreau, a glaciologist from Chamonix.

Moreau described a process called ablation in which the wind accelerates evaporation.

"It is mainly the wind and the snow which will influence the altitude of the summit. The wind will remove the snow or not," he said, adding that the dome of Mont Blanc was more like a "dune complex" with strong winter winds stripping snow from the summit.

The 2.22-metre decline in the mountain's height could be down to lower precipitation during summer, said Jean des Garets, the chief geometer in the Haute-Savoie department of south-eastern France. "Mont Blanc could well be much taller in two years [when it is next measured]," he added.

The mountain's rocky peak measures 4,792 metres above sea level, but its thick covering of ice and snow varies in height from year to year depending on wind and weather.

Researchers have been measuring it every two years since 2001, hoping to collect information about the impact of climate change on the Alps.

"We're gathering the data for future generations. We're not here to interpret them, we leave that up to the scientists," Des Garets said..

"After these measurement campaigns, we have already learned a lot: we know that the summit is in perpetual movement in altitude with variations of almost 5 metres."

The impact of global warming has been well documented in the Alps. Its glaciers have lost a third of their volume in recent years and the mountain range has also lost permafrost – soil and rocky material that stays frozen continuously for at least two years and acts as a glue for major mountain features – above an approximate height of 2,200 metres.

'Genocide of millions'

Portugal accused of failing to confront its slave-trading past

Sam Jones and Gonçalo Fonseca *Lisbon*
Philip Oltermann

One morning towards the end of June, tourists visiting the monolithic hulk of the *Padrão dos Descobrimentos* (Monument of the Discoveries), which has loomed over the Tagus River for six decades, arrived to find it had been defaced. "The nation that killed Africa," read graffiti scrawled on the monument to Portugal's pioneering role in the age of discovery. Then, as a contemporary afterthought: "Wakanda forever."

A similar, if more poetic, sentiment was expressed in spray-paint applied to the side of the landmark two years ago. "Blindly sailing for money, humanity is drowning in a scarlet sea," it read.

The terse latest message reflects the anger and frustration many people feel as Portugal considers the difficult task of confronting its colonial and slave-trading past.

Almost six months ago, the Portuguese president, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, suggested the time had come for the country to "assume responsibility" for its past and apologise for its actions. If his words were tentative, they nonetheless appeared to represent a shift from the views he had expressed six years ago on the island of Gorée off Senegal, which for centuries was one of the key slave-trading centres on the African coast. He chose to focus on the fact that his country had set about abolishing slavery in the 1760s after recognising its "injustice".

He did not mention that Portugal was the European country with the longest involvement in the slave trade, kidnapping and forcibly transporting about 6 million African men, women and children across the Atlantic between the 15th and 19th centuries. Nor did he mention that his country had abolished slavery only on the Portuguese mainland in 1761 – the trade to Brazil continued and slavery was not completely abolished across all the territories that Portugal controlled until 1869.

"[What the president said in 2017] was a lie – and he knew it was a lie," says Evalina Dias, a project manager at Djass, Portugal's association of African descendants. "He's a very intelligent man but he still said it because it was a way not to acknowledge what happened. He was saying: 'Yes, we did it, but we were the first to abolish it.' I think they didn't want to talk about it back then." Dias says people find it hard to admit that the racism fostered by slavery and colonialism still exists – let alone acknowledge how thoroughly it has come to permeate Portuguese society.

"The problem here is the structural racism that doesn't allow black people or Africans to do a lot of things, like having the same rights as other people," she says. "Even if it's written [in law], they try to avoid it. If you go to a health centre and you're not legalised, you're still entitled to be treated. But when you get there, they'll tell you that you're not – even if you have documents. I've lived here all my life and it's happened to me. It's a way of frustrating people every day when it comes to employment, health, education and housing."

For Djass and for many others, there are few better examples of that inaction than the delays in creating a memorial intended to stand in stark contrast to the *Padrão dos Descobrimentos*.

Plantação (Plantation), a permanent piece conceived by the Angolan conceptual artist Kiluanji Kia Henda, should long since have appeared on the quayside a few miles from the discovery monument. But bureaucratic delays, feasibility studies and arguments over where it should be located have dogged the project's progress since it began in 2017.

According to Kia Henda, its 540 blackened metal sugarcanes are intended to evoke a burnt plantation as a way of honouring enslaved people, while also reminding visitors that the system that relied on slavery is still ubiquitous and all powerful.

Lisbon city council says the €185,000 (£159,000) work is intended to help ensure the tragedy of the slave trade never fades from memory, but adds that the project has been "a lengthy, demanding and intensive process, which has been a highly challenging endeavour for the municipality".

Henda believes much of Portugal's inability to face the past lies in the incomplete image it presents to the world – and to itself. Just as the UK thrives on its castles, kings and queens, he says, "Portugal today lives essentially from tourism" and on a "romanticised" and sanitised interpretation of its past.

Isabel Almeida Rodrigues, the secretary of state for equality and migration in Portugal's socialist government, argues that the Salazar dictatorship of 1933-74 – during which the *Padrão dos Descobrimentos* was built – had a profound and enduring effect on the country's self-image.

"To understand our role and our past, we must first understand that we lived in a nationalistic-conservative dictatorship for around 40 years," she says. "Abolishing the dictatorship meant throwing off the yoke of colonialism, which is why the revolution can be seen as a movement against racism. However, throughout that 40-year period, not only did our education system unfortunately transmit an excessively nationalistic perspective regarding our history, but the dictatorship, as a whole, also instilled several prejudices in people regarding our former dependencies."

Almeida Rodrigues insists education is now at the forefront of the government's efforts to tackle racism and combat the colonial myths that help underpin it. "I think there's a direct link between education and tackling not only present-day racism, but also future-day racism – in Portugal and everywhere in the world."

The sentiment is shared by Dino D'Santiago, one of Portugal's best-known musicians. D'Santiago, who is of Cape Verdean descent and sings in Creole and Portuguese, says education, a proper explanation of the past, and a full and meaningful apology from Rebelo de Sousa are all needed.

"A real sorry from the president of the country for what we did would be the first affirmation and a way of humanising the victims," he says. "People don't know what was done. Instead of talking about the discovery of Brazil, we need to talk about the genocide of millions of people."

Such efforts are not always easy – as D'Santiago discovered for himself in January when he suggested that Portugal could rethink the words of its national anthem. "When I said that, the reaction was: 'Go and do the Cape Verdean anthem,' or :'Go do the Guinean or Mozambican anthem, because you don't have the right to touch our history.'

An apology seems like the first step. A few genuine and well-chosen words, says D'Santiago, could provide a vital first step. "Pain follows you," says the singer. "If you're hurt as a child and you don't get that damage repaired, it will be with you until you die … If you say sorry about the millions of people who died, you're showing respect for their memories and for the people who are the descendants of that tragedy. I'm one of those descendants, but I'm a descendant with a lot of hope."



▼ *Lisbon's discovery monument avoids the issue of slavery, a key part of the country's age of exploration*
PHOTOGRAPH: EMMANUELE CONTINI/GETTY



◀ *Evalina Dias, a project manager at Djass, Portugal's association of African descendants*
PHOTOGRAPH: GONÇALO FONSECA/ THE GUARDIAN

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Business

Prosecutors in Post Office IT scandal 'not properly trained'

Julia Kollewe

The Post Office did not provide adequate guidance and training to its prosecutors investigating staff accused of wrongdoing in the Horizon IT scandal, according to a criminal prosecutions expert.

More than 700 post office operators were prosecuted in England and Wales between 1999 and 2015 for theft, fraud and false accounting because of faulty accounting software installed in the late 1990s.

So far, 86 post office operators have had their wrongful convictions overturned and £21m has been paid in compensation after what has been described as "the most widespread miscarriage of justice in UK history".

An inquiry into the scandal is being led by the retired high court judge Sir Wyn Williams, and is looking at the period between 2000 and 2013.

In a damning report published to coincide with his testimony yesterday, Duncan Atkinson KC, the inquiry's expert witness for criminal prosecutions, said: "I have reviewed the Post Office policies in relation to investigation, prosecution and related areas, and have concerns as to their adequacy to achieve these objectives."

In particular, he said there had been a "lack of explicit instruction" to investigators and prosecutors to ensure that they "should pursue all reasonable lines of inquiry, whether these point towards or away from the suspect", as required under the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act (CPIA) code. "This duty is of central importance to the securing of a fair trial," he said.

Appearing before Williams, Atkinson said: "It is in my view fundamental that that is a guiding light to any investigation, and any review of any investigation." However, the Post Office's policy did not refer to this until 2010. "That is a serious omission," Atkinson said.

Every post office operator whose wrongful conviction has been overturned will receive £600,000 in compensation from the government. However, some have spent time in prison, and the scandal has been linked to four suicides.

As the owner of the Post Office, the government is responsible for funding compensation payments.

Atkinson looked at whether investigators and prosecutors acting for the Post Office had complied with the CPIA and Police and Criminal Evidence Act (Pace) codes, and concluded that the "policy landscape for a significant period was not sufficient to ensure consistent and comprehensive compliance with a number of important aspects of the Pace and CPIA regimes".

£21m

Amount paid out in compensation so far to Post Office staff wrongfully convicted in the Horizon scandal

He told the inquiry that he also had "concerns about the adequacy of policy guidance to achieve a proper division of responsibility so as to achieve independence, transparency, accountability and consistency".

"Post Office policies left it open for the same person, or group of persons, to make key investigation and prosecution decisions," Atkinson said, and criticised the "lack of detailed guidance as to how … compliance with proper standards was to be achieved or monitored".

The inquiry began three years ago and was converted into a statutory inquiry in June 2021.

In August, Nick Read, the Post Office's chief executive, said he would return a bonus of £54,400 linked to the inquiry into the Horizon scandal. He apologised for "procedural and governance mistakes" made by the Post Office that had linked significant bonus payments to work carried out in relation to the inquiry.

Tories' net zero U-turn will put off investors, says Carney

Richard Partington
Economics correspondent

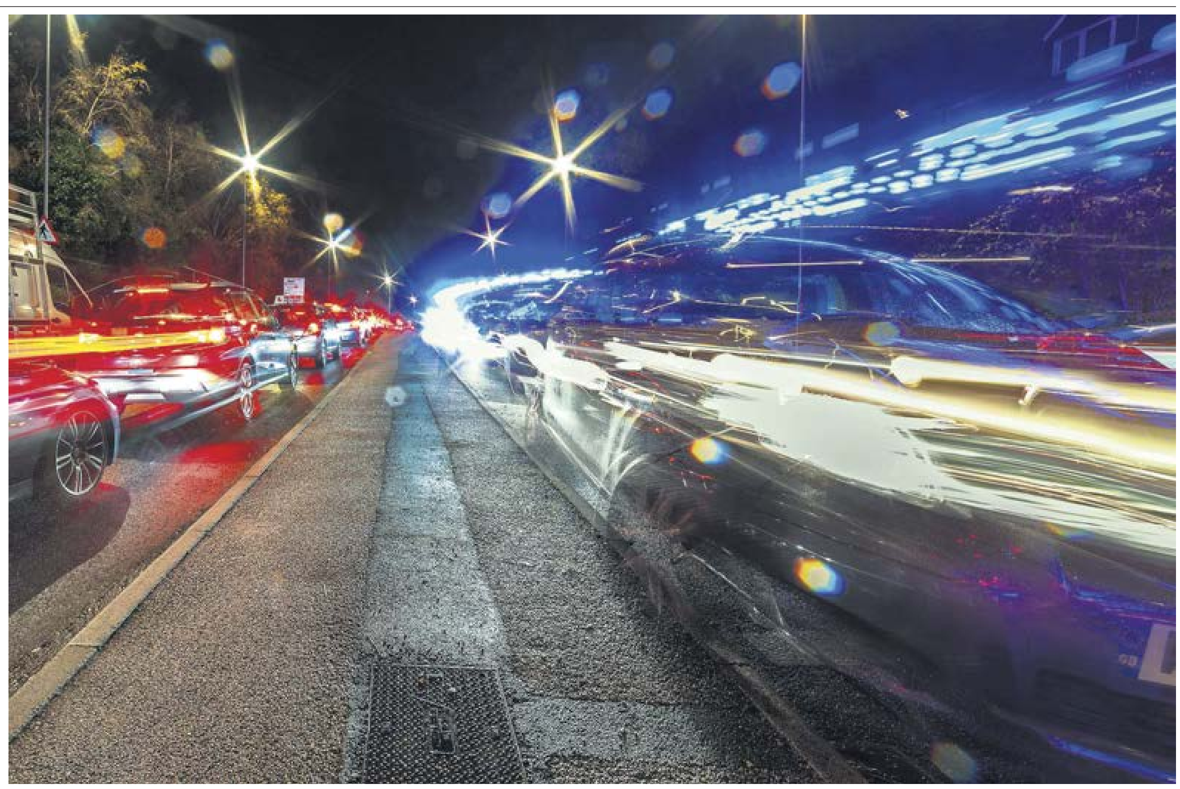
Rishi Sunak's watering-down of the UK's climate commitments has damaged Britain's position on the world stage with regard to business investment, according to the former Bank of England governor Mark Carney.

In comments highly critical of the prime minister, Carney said that global companies would now think twice about locating their activities in the UK after Sunak pushed back key net zero deadlines and said the government would license new oil and gas drilling.

At an online event, speaking to Nick Macpherson, a former permanent secretary to the Treasury, Carney said major businesses he had spoken to prioritised countries with clear environmental commitments before making investment decisions.

"In my conversations with companies around the world, their first conversation about location is: 'Am I getting clean power?' It doesn't make sense to relocate without green power. You start throwing that into doubt [and] it becomes a lot more complicated discussion."

Sunak last month announced a U-turn on the government's climate commitments, including a decision to push back a 2030 deadline for a ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars to 2035. The prime minister also kickstarted a new round of North Sea drilling, pledging to "max out" the UK's oil and gas reserves.



▲ *Busy traffic on a British motorway. Rishi Sunak has pushed back the ban on sales of new petrol and diesel cars*
PHOTOGRAPH: ALAMY

'Companies' first conversation about location is: am I getting clean power?'

Mark Carney
Former Bank governor

Carney, who as the Bank's governor pushed to accelerate the decarbonisation of the global economy, called the decision "mistaken", adding: "If you make a credible forward commitment - particularly with the market and businesses looking forward - they do most of the work for you. And then it's less of an issue."

Pushing ahead with new oil and gas drilling risked creating a "stranded asset problem" in the UK energy sector, he warned, referring to the risk that the transition away from fossil fuels could drastically cut the value of the industry's assets.

Highlighting forecasts from the International Energy Agency that global oil demand will peak this decade, Carney said: "You go back three, four years, and it was the 2030s. That's how much things have moved … We are going to have the stranded asset problem … and it's going to crystallise sooner than people think."

Britain's cloud computing market faces competition investigation

Dan Milmo
Global technology editor

The UK communications regulator has referred Britain's £7.5bn cloud computing market to the competition watchdog for a formal investigation after a study raised concerns about the industry leaders Amazon and Microsoft.

Ofcom has asked the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to launch an inquiry, saying it is "particularly concerned about the position of the market leaders Amazon and Microsoft".

Cloud computing, or the delivery of IT services such as data storage and computing power over the internet with a pay-as-you-go pricing structure, is widely used by businesses and has emerged as a significant piece of infrastructure in the development of the next generation of AI models.

Fergal Farragher, the Ofcom director who oversaw the watchdog's study into the cloud market, said companies had expressed concerns about the difficulty of switching or mixing and matching cloud providers. Industries ranging from TV production to telecoms networks and AI "rely on remote computer power that goes unseen", he said.

"Some UK businesses have told us they're concerned about it being too difficult to switch or mix and match cloud provider, and it's not clear that competition is working well."

Microsoft and Amazon together control up to 80% of the £7.5bn UK cloud computing market.

AWS said the company disagreed with Ofcom's findings, adding that they were based on a "fundamental misconception of how the IT sector functions". The spokesperson said: "UK companies, and the overall economy, benefit from robust competition among IT providers, and the cloud has made switching between providers easier than ever."

A Microsoft spokesperson said the company was "committed" to a competitive UK cloud industry and would engage with the CMA investigation.



▲ *Amazon and Microsoft control up to 80% of UK cloud computing*

Business view
Nils Pratley



Crackdown will not stub out tobacco companies' share prices

Did "the biggest public health intervention in a generation" whack the share prices of tobacco firms? Well, it caused a slight cough. Imperial Brands - the Embassy, JPS, Lambert & Butler and Rizla firm - was a big faller in the FTSE 100 index on Wednesday as Rishi Sunak revealed his plan to make it illegal for anybody currently aged 14 or younger ever to buy a cigarette in England.

Gradual prohibition, on the face of it, sounds more serious than advertising bans, higher taxes and removing the cancer sticks from pubs - measures that have been quite effective over the years in driving down rates of smoking. So, yes, investors' nervousness was understandable.

And, with due respect to New Zealand, the policy pioneer, it's more significant for these globally active firms when it's England talking about creating a "smoke-free generation". If the European Union, or even the US, were to follow, one could definitely refer to a new era.

On day two, though, Imperial's shares recovered all the lost ground and more. That reaction is also explicable. Even if Sunak's proposal can be successfully enforced (ID checks at corner shops for 24-year-olds in 10 years' time? Really?) the life expectancy of tobacco firms' business models won't be shortened by much.

The economics of this industry remain solid. A chunk of the customers die prematurely or give up, but the committed ones tend to be brand-loyal. A ban on advertising saves a fortune in marketing costs and no new competitors ever appear. Obsolescence (one hopes) will arrive eventually but, in the meantime, cash rolls up if the business is run efficiently.



▲ *Sunak revealed his plan to make it illegal for anybody currently aged 14 or younger ever to buy a cigarette*

Imperial itself provided an illustration of how much cash yesterday as it announced a £1.1bn share buyback, on top of last year's £1bn one. It also spoke about "an ongoing, multi-year buyback programme that will deliver a material reduction in the capital base over time". Last year's purchase of shares for cancellation reduced the count by 5.5%; this year's shrinkage would be 7.8% at the current share price.

> *Even if Sunak's idea can be enforced, the life expectancy of tobacco firms' business models won't be shortened by much*

Now consider that Imperial's stock market value is roughly £14.5bn and let Rae Maile, Panmure Gordon's sector analyst, work the numbers. "At £1.1bn per annum, the shares [will] have all been retired by 2033, by which point a current UK 14-year-old will be 24 and standing outside a corner shop begging their 25 year-old friend to buy them 20 Embassy," he says.

In reality, of course, the last share in Imperial will not be available for purchase at today's price of £16.64. If the buybacks keep coming at the current pace for several more years, the price will have motored long before then if nothing else changes.

But there is an irony here. To the extent that government intervention scares investors and keeps Imperial's share price depressed, the buyback arithmetic improves: the company can cancel more shares for the same sum.

Maile thinks prohibition is unworkable anyway, but here's his top line: "Long before the last smoker in the UK stops smoking, Imperial can have bought back all of its issued equity." He has a point.

UK construction slumps after fall in housebuilding

Phillip Inman

A slump in the building of new homes across Britain in September triggered the biggest fall in construction activity since May 2020, according to a closely watched survey.

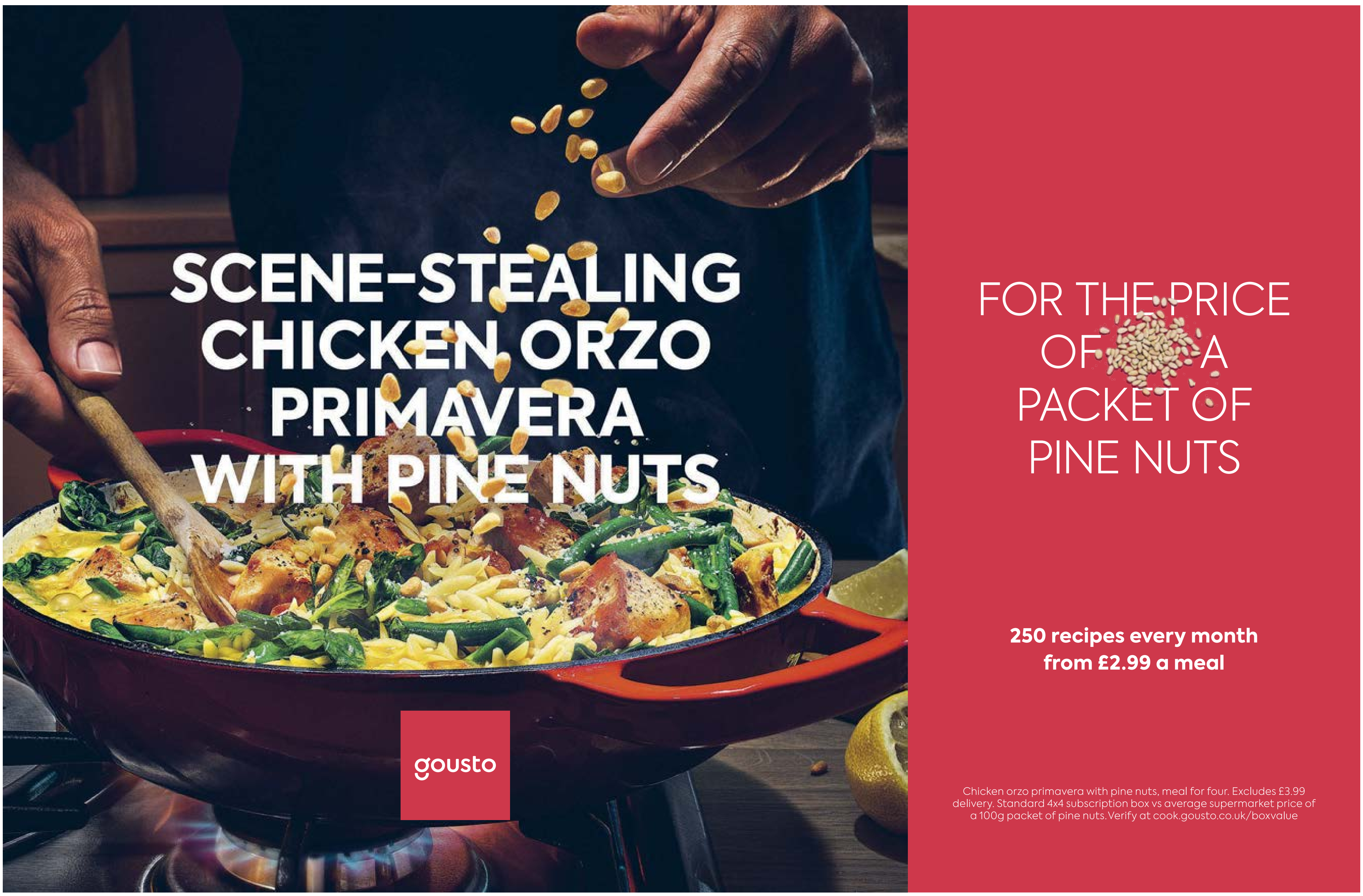
Engineering and infrastructure projects also suffered a sharp fall in activity that was partly blamed on the government pausing work on the HS2 rail link in the summer.

The latest S&P Global/CIPS construction purchasing managers' index showed a score of 45.0 in September, a steep drop from 50.8 in August. A score below 50 suggests declining output.

S&P said total new business received by construction companies decreased for the third time in the past four months during September.

"Moreover, the rate of decline was the steepest seen since May 2020," the survey said.

A separate index for residential work fell to 38.1, the biggest drop since April 2009.



Fight against inflation could keep interest rates high until 2025, warns head of IMF

Larry Elliott
Economics editor

The head of the International Monetary Fund has warned that a final victory in the fight against inflation could spell trouble for financial markets by forcing central banks to keep interest rates high until 2025.

In an interview before next week's IMF annual meeting in Marrakech, Kristalina Georgieva said there was a risk of borrowing costs staying high for a protracted period, with knock-on effects for asset prices.

The IMF's managing director said there had been progress in bringing inflation down, but some countries had done better than others.

"It's not done, and that puts a question mark over the longevity of high interest rates - certainly through 2024 and maybe all the way to 2025. So you have weak growth prospects and tighter financial conditions," she said.

Bond yields, a measure of the cost of servicing government debt, have soared in developed country markets in the past week as investors have realised that official interest rates could remain higher for longer.

Georgieva said there had been a "pile up" of asset valuations before it dawned on businesses that it would take time for interest rates to start coming down. "So now inflation expectations have moved up, is there a risk of a sharp repricing and then financial stability considerations?"

She has just completed the fourth year of her five-year term as the head of the IMF, a period she said had been dominated by two "unthinkable" events: the Covid-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Both, she said, had left their mark, but the IMF had responded "swiftly and on the necessary scale" to each of them.

"The world economy is recovering, but it is slow and uneven. There is still quite a lot of scarring from Covid and the war. The US is the only economy that has returned to its pre-pandemic trend. The eurozone is 2% below, emerging markets are 4-5% below and low-income countries are 6% below," she said.

"So the scarring is there and when you look at the growth prospects they are weak. In the next five years we expect an average of 3% a year compared with 3.8% a year in the five years before Covid."

Georgieva added: "We have wounds to heal and growth is simply not enough to do it and bring more prosperity to people."



'Countries have to be more ambitious in pressing for structural reforms to energise growth'

Kristalina Georgieva
IMF managing director

◀ *Kristalina Georgieva's term has included two 'unthinkable' events: Covid-19 and the invasion of Ukraine*
PHOTOGRAPH: GRIPAS YURI/ABACA/SHUTTERSTOCK



PHOTOGRAPH: HÉCTOR RETAMAL/AFP/GETTY

▲ *Wuhan, China, in January 2020. Economic growth has yet to return to pre-pandemic levels in many countries*

The full-scale military invasion of Ukraine had begun just as the global economy was starting to recover from the pandemic. Georgieva described it as a "big black cloud hanging over the world economy".

While the war had been devastating for the people of Ukraine, there had been spillover effects in other countries such as Germany, the worst performing of the G7 economies.

"Look at the impacts already: defence expenditure up. We had a peace dividend, but we don't have it any more. It is gone, understandably, because we can no longer take peace for granted," said Georgieva.

She added: "Think about how much more could have been done for infrastructure, education and international development if the Russians didn't invade Ukraine and destroy our sense of security."

Next week's annual meetings of the IMF and the World Bank will take place as planned despite the devastating earthquake that struck Morocco last month, killing almost 3,000 people.

Georgieva said she had four big objectives for the meeting: to put in place the right policies to bring down inflation and increase growth; to increase the IMF's financial firepower so it could help countries in economic trouble; to persuade wealthy countries to subsidise zero-interest rate loans to low-income nations; and to make more rapid progress in delivering debt relief.

"We do need to bring the fight against inflation to victory. Inflation is bad for growth, but it is also harmful for the poorer parts of the population," she said.

"Countries have to be more ambitious in pressing for structural reforms to energise growth, and that means more focus on productivity enhancements and the green transition to create new dynamism."

Georgieva said the IMF had lent $160bn (£132bn) to help countries affected by the pandemic and a further $160bn in the aftermath of the invasion of Ukraine.

She added that the IMF needed richer countries to respond to a more "shock-prone world" by providing the resources to increase the size of the fund's safety net.

"Every shock hits the most vulnerable countries the most. They don't have reserves. For them we are the insurer," Georgieva said.

The IMF chief said progress was being made with the common framework - an initiative launched by the G20 group of large developed and developing economies in 2020 designed to speed up debt relief but had faced criticism for the time it had taken to deliver help to a small number of heavily indebted countries.

"We are moving in the right direction, though not as fast as I would like," she said. "Debt is a serious problem for the countries that are affected, but it is not yet and we don't see it becoming a systemic debt crisis problem.

"Countries that are in debt distress are still a relatively manageable number. We are trying to help countries in near debt distress from sliding deeper into financial problems."

WTO says goods trade growth will be lower than expected

Phillip Inman

The World Trade Organization has halved its forecast for global goods trade growth this year, in response to rising interest rates that have dented consumer spending power in the US, Europe and Asia.

The 164-member body slashed its April estimate that had predicted the global trade in goods would grow by 1.7% in 2023, saying it needed to be scaled back to 0.8%.

Persistent inflation had kept interest rates higher for longer than expected in most trading nations, the WTO said, while a strained Chinese property market and the war in Ukraine also cast a shadow over its outlook.

The Geneva-based body said the slowdown was broad-based, involving a wide spectrum of goods, though particularly iron and steel, office and telecoms equipment, textiles and clothing. Cars were a notable exception, with surging sales this year compensating for chronic shortages that had limited shipments during the pandemic.

Separate figures released yesterday showing a drop in German exports highlighted how trade in Europe's largest economy has weakened this year. German exports fell by 1.2% in August, according to official figures, while imports fell by 0.4%.

The WTO outlook came before similar assessments of the global economy due next week from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank at their joint meeting in Marrakech, Morocco.

Both organisations are likely to downgrade their growth forecasts on the back of signals from central banks that they will be forced by inflationary pressures to keep interest rates elevated for longer than expected.

An optimistic assessment by the Washington-based Peterson Institute showed most of the world recovering strongly next year after a fall back in inflation eases interest rates and spurs growth.

0.8%

The rise in 2023 global goods trade now forecast by the WTO - it had predicted 1.7% back in April

After growing 3.4% in 2022, the wider global economy was projected to expand 3% in 2023 and 2.8% in 2024. The WTO said growth next year would be supported by a bounceback in trade to 3.3%, which is unchanged from its April forecast.

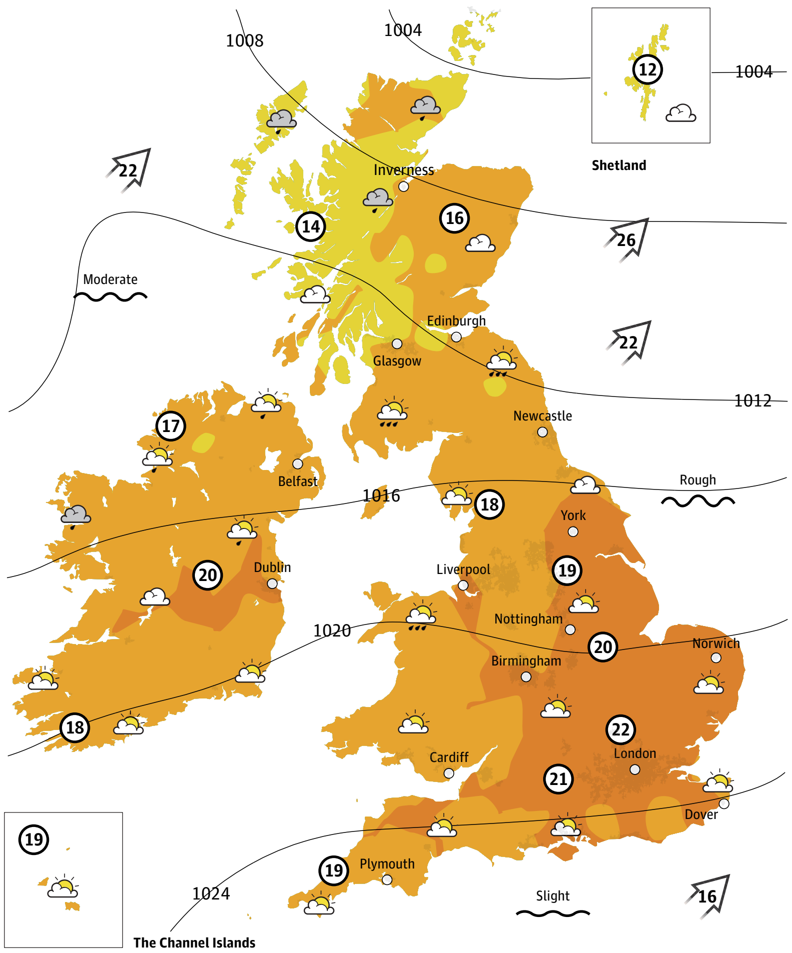
There were signs of trade battles across the world leading to sanctions and blockades of goods, it said, but there was no evidence of a broader deglobalisation that could threaten its 2024 forecast.

The WTO's director general, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, said the expected slowdown of trade was a cause for concern because it could depress the living standards of people around the world, particularly in poor countries.

Weather
Friday 6 October 2023

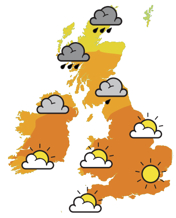
UK and Ireland Noon today



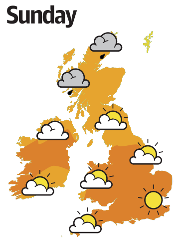


Forecast

Low 14 High 22
Tomorrow



Low 12 High 20
Sunday



Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO_2 readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

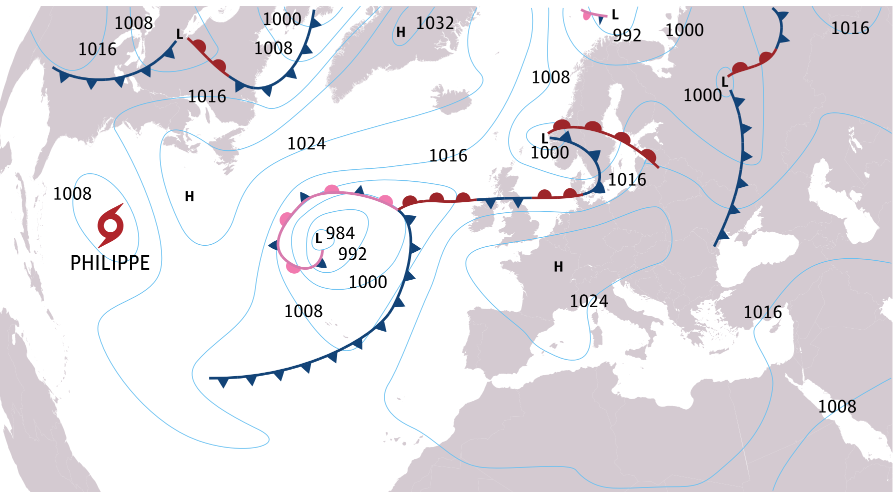
Latest	
02 Oct 2023	418.37
Weekly average	
24 Sep 2023	418.29
05 Oct 2022	415.34
05 Oct 2013	393.46
Pre-industrial base	*280*
Safe level	*350*

Source: NOAA-ESRL

Around the UK

	Lows and highs	Precipitation	Air pollution
London	14 22	5%	Low
Manchester	14 19	70%	Low
Edinburgh	13 16	70%	Low
Belfast	16 18	70%	Low
Birmingham	13 20	15%	Low
Brighton	15 19	0%	Low
Bristol	13 19	5%	Low
Cardiff	14 18	5%	Low
Newcastle	13 19	80%	Low
Penzance	15 18	0%	Low

Atlantic front



Cold front

Warm front

Occluded front

Trough

High tides

Source: © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Times are local UK times

Aberdeen	**0702**	3.5m	**1923**	3.5m
Avonmouth	**--**	--	**1158**	10.4m
Barrow	**0437**	7.5m	**1658**	7.3m
Belfast	**0434**	3.1m	**1658**	3.2m
Cobh	**1043**	3.3m	**2305**	3.2m
Cromer	**--**	--	**1207**	4.1m
Dover	**0419**	5.8m	**1645**	5.6m
Dublin	**0506**	3.4m	**1735**	3.4m
Galway	**1035**	4.1m	**2318**	3.7m
Greenock	**0531**	3.1m	**1739**	3.2m
Harwich	**0440**	3.5m	**1707**	3.5m
Holyhead	**0339**	4.6m	**1602**	4.6m
Hull	**1133**	6.1m	**2338**	5.9m
Leith	**0817**	4.6m	**2041**	4.4m
Liverpool	**0412**	7.7m	**1635**	7.5m
London Bridge	**0648**	6.0m	**1918**	6.2m
Lossiemouth	**0516**	3.3m	**1736**	3.3m
Milford Haven	**1124**	5.5m	**2359**	5.1m
Newquay	**1019**	5.6m	**2255**	5.2m
North Shields	**0903**	4.2m	**2123**	4.1m
Oban	**1029**	3.1m	**2312**	2.7m
Penzance	**0955**	4.5m	**2226**	4.2m
Plymouth	**1030**	4.7m	**2249**	4.3m
Portsmouth	**0453**	4.1m	**1707**	4.0m
Southport	**0325**	7.4m	**1548**	7.2m
Stornoway	**0033**	3.7m	**1304**	3.7m
Weymouth	**1047**	0.7m	**2321**	0.4m
Whitby	**0931**	4.6m	**2151**	4.5m
Wick	**0442**	2.8m	**1659**	2.8m
Workington	**0442**	6.8m	**1705**	6.6m

Sun & Moon



Sun rises	0708
Sun sets	1827
Moon rises	2232
Moon sets	1547
Last Quarter	6 Oct

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather** ©2023

Lighting up

Belfast	1849 to 0738
Birm'ham	1833 to 0718
Brighton	1828 to 0710
Bristol	1838 to 0721
Carlisle	1835 to 0724
Cork	1901 to 0744
Dublin	1851 to 0737
Glasgow	1841 to 0732
Harlech	1842 to 0728
Inverness	1838 to 0732
London	1827 to 0710
M'chester	1835 to 0721
Newcastle	1831 to 0720
Norwich	1821 to 0706
Penzance	1850 to 0731

Pollutionwatch

A new study from the US has shown an increased risk of lung cancer in homes that use wood-burning stoves or fireplaces.

One in 17 US women are expected to be diagnosed with lung cancer in their lifetime. Using an indoor wood stove or fireplace increased women's risk of developing lung cancer by 43% compared with those who did not use them.

The results come from the Sister Study, which has tracked the health of 50,000 women for an average of 11 years. During this time 347 participants were diagnosed with lung cancer, including 58 women who never smoked.

Dr Suril Mehta of the US National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, first author of the study, said: "Our study provides evidence that even occasional indoor wood burning from stoves and fireplaces can contribute to lung cancer in populations where indoor wood burning is not the predominant fuel source for cooking or heating inside the home."

Prof Fay Johnston from the Menzies Institute for Medical Research, Tasmania, who was not involved in the study, said: "The message is clear … Interventions to reduce exposure in homes should be a priority." **Gary Fuller**

Around the world

Algiers	30	Lisbon	33
Ams'dam	18	Madrid	31
Athens	27	Malaga	27
Auckland	17	Melb'rne	15
B Aires	24	Mexico C	27
Bangkok	32	Miami	32
Barcelona	26	Milan	26
Basra	38	Mombasa	30
Beijing	24	Moscow	11
Berlin	18	Mumbai	31
Bermuda	28	N Orleans	29
Brussels	20	Nairobi	27
Budapest	21	New Delhi	36
C'hagen	16	New York	21
Cairo	31	Oslo	12
Cape Town	23	Paris	23
Chicago	16	Perth	32
Corfu	27	Prague	18
Dakar	32	Reykjavik	6
Dhaka	30	Rio de J	27
Dublin	20	Rome	26
Florence	29	Shanghai	25
Gibraltar	25	Singapore	33
H Kong	32	Stockh'm	10
Harare	31	Strasb'g	21
Helsinki	10	Sydney	20
Istanbul	24	Tel Aviv	29
Jo'burg	32	Tenerife	35
K Lumpur	33	Tokyo	25
K'mandu	28	Toronto	22
Kabul	27	Vancouv'r	18
Kingston	32	Vienna	21
Kolkata	32	Warsaw	16
L Angeles	35	Wash'ton	25
Lagos	28	Well'ton	16
Lima	21	Zurich	20

Football

Australia given 25 days to confirm World Cup bid

Page 37 →

Rugby union

Price is right for Scotland in Ireland decider

Page 38 →



Sport



▲ *Luis Díaz finishes for Liverpool at Spurs but the on-field offside call was not overturned due to VAR confusion at Stockley Park*
MARC ATKINS/GETTY IMAGES

From VAR to variety

There will never be no wrong calls, but is having refs on video duty the right one?



Max Rushden

I will love it if we beat them. You can't win anything with kids. When the seagull follows the trawler. I am a special one. Time to add another unforgettable line to the history of the Premier League: "That's wrong that, Daz." Four words of agonising paralysis from the VAR room. By the end it sounds like the black box recording of pilot and co-pilot careering into a mountain: "Can't do anything." "No." "I can't do anything." Three seconds of silence. "[Expletive]."

In the middle of it, the superhero we never knew we needed - Mo Abby, the artist formerly known as UNNAMED REPLAY OPERATOR. "Are you happy with this?" he asks politely as the crisis unfolds in front of his eyes. Something like: "FOR THE LOVE OF GOD DARREN, STOP!" might have been more appropriate. In the new Amazon Prime show ExVARsperated his pained face glances briefly straight down the barrel of the camera and then back to his computer.

What next for him? The Masked Singer, with Jonathan Ross and Rita Ora speculating from on high? "I know that voice from somewhere. Not even Sade sang it as well. Is it Mo Abby, the SMOOTH REPLAY OPERATOR?" He is helped in removing his giant porcupine head to reveal it is indeed he. Ross and Ora high five. The audience is mesmerised. There's ticker tape. Within weeks he's hosting Heart Breakfast.

The only other character than the replay operator to emerge with credit is Oli Kohout, the VAR hub operations executive. In a separate room headbutting a wall shouting "DELAY DELAY DELAY DELAY". He's probably still there yelling into the abyss. Like everyone else by now I've been on his LinkedIn page: four years at Hawk-Eye, a degree in sports technology and six years volunteering as a rollerblading coach at the Arena Leisure Centre in Camberley. Perhaps if he had spent less spare time generously showing kids how to do a figure of eight and instead become more effective at loudly despairing at generic middle-aged Englishmen we wouldn't be in this mess.

But it's not on him, nor on the replay operator. No, we are left with the VAR, Darren England and his assistant, Dan Cook, just not being good enough in the moment. How they must wish Luis Díaz had just screwed it wide. What would we have talked about this week? It's very easy after the event to suggest we would all have dealt with it better. Get them to stop. Explain the issue to both managers. Get Spurs to allow Liverpool to walk one in. But if I recall every confrontation in my life or mistake I've made where I've thought of the right thing to say or do about three hours later, I can't say with any confidence I wouldn't have just frozen and hoped it all went away somehow.

The sensible suggestions have been made. Say words such as: "It's a goal" or "It's not a goal" (depending on whether it is a goal or not - good to be clear about these things). Have the audio available for every game as a matter of course - so it isn't just released when there's a fervour to throw a ref under the bus.

It is dangerous to read too much into one clip, but are the conditions such where the replay operator could highlight the mistake more forcefully without worrying about what the qualified officials might think of him? We have all worked in places where more junior members of staff are fearful of speaking their mind. Do VARs have to be referees? They are different skills. How much would those in charge of it, the referees' body PGMOL, benefit from hiring from a wider pool of people?

It doesn't seem sensible to be travelling to the Middle East for an exhibition game on the Thursday before a Premier League match two days later. It feels different to doing a Europa League match, even if the principle is the same. The audio should put paid to suggestions of some sort of corrupt super-plot, where it turns out England has been offered the crown princedom of a yet-to-be-discovered corner of the United Arab Emirates in return for helping Manchester City win the league. It won't stop some. Without any evidence we should accept just some good old-fashioned incompetence.

> *It is easy to suggest we would all have dealt with it better - I can't say I wouldn't have frozen and hoped it went away*

It's unhelpful of Jürgen Klopp to ask for a replay. He explained it calmly and clearly but do title-chasing Arsenal need a replay against Brentford last season after the Bees equalised with a goal that should have been ruled out for offside? Fundamentally, I don't see a tangible difference. Liverpool should have been one up. Arsenal should have stayed one up.

Mistakes happen, which brings us back to VAR and the point of it. There are fewer incorrect decisions - no one goes wild when VAR is good. But there aren't zero incorrect decisions. There never will be. Lots of calls are about interpretation and humans are fallible.

We don't love referees, so our openness to forgive them for erring is far less than it is for players. They MUST be held accountable. People make mistakes for lots of reasons: incompetence, inadequate training, tiredness and pressure. We don't have a lot of power to affect much of that - but many of us are responsible for the pressure. Officials are constantly harangued by players, by managers, by the crowd - every decision is dissected that afternoon on the radio and TV and then again the following day. Add to that relentless abuse on social media. They would make fewer mistakes if none of that happened. Wishful thinking maybe, but worth trying before the good ones rollerblade out of Stockley Park in search of a quieter life.

Football
In brief

Europa League

West Ham run goes on with impressive victory

West Ham continued their continental cruise as headers from Lucas Paquetá and Nayef Aguerd secured a 2-1 win at Freiburg and a record 17th match unbeaten in Europe. The Hammers took control of Europa League Group A with a battling display in southern Germany. Paquetá put the visitors ahead after only nine minutes, meeting a Jarrod Bowen cross with a towering header. The Hammers sat back on their lead and there was an all too familiar feeling when Freiburg equalised after the restart. Lukasz Fabianski was unfortunate, keeping out Roland Sallai's shot and the follow-up from Lukas Kübler, but Sallai smashed the ball home at the third attempt. However, in the 66th minute, Nayef Aguerd nodded a James Ward-Prowse corner past Noah Atubolu to secure the victory. **PA Media**

Europa League

Davis fails to halt slump as Rangers are beaten

Managerless Rangers' season went from bad to worse with a 2-1 Europa League defeat by Aris Limassol in Cyprus. Steven Davis was asked to take over on an interim basis after Michael Beale was dismissed at the weekend but whatever plan Davis put in place for Europe did not work in a dreadful first-half performance which saw defender Alex Moucketou-Moussounda head the home side in front after just nine minutes. Striker Shavy Babicka added a simple second goal in the 59th minute before Rangers forward Abdallah Sima pulled a goal back 10 minutes later. However, despite heavy pressure in the final stages, the visitors could not complete the comeback. **PA Media**

Chesterfield

Dyer leaves hospital after liver transplant

The former England international Kieron Dyer has undergone a successful liver transplant and been discharged from hospital. Dyer was diagnosed with primary sclerosing cholangitis, a chronic liver condition, in 2019. **PA Media**



Lucas Paquetá enjoys the moment after scoring West Ham's first



Off the mark and deadlock broken

Ryan Gravenberch celebrates his first Liverpool goal against Union Saint-Gilloise
ANDREW POWELL/ LIVERPOOL FC/ GETTY IMAGES

Gravenberch and Jota bring tumultuous week to happy end

Liverpool	**2**
Gravenberch 44, Jota 90+2	
Union Saint-Gilloise	**0**

Andy Hunter
Anfield

There will be no calls to replay this game but Jürgen Klopp got what he needed from the visit of Union Saint-Gilloise nonetheless. Liverpool returned to winning ways with a minimum of fuss and without being dragged into any controversies that might dominate the football agenda for the next five days. The Europa League served as a release.

A modest Liverpool performance was notable for the first goal of Ryan Gravenberch's Anfield career plus a vibrant, threatening contribution from the deadline day signing from Bayern Munich. Diogo Jota buried the frustration of his harsh red card at Tottenham – or incorrect red card according to the Premier League's key match incidents panel – with a clinical second to seal victory in stoppage time. Union threatened to punish a subdued second-half display from Klopp's team but the tournament favourites are easing towards the knockout stage after two matches.

"I knew it would be difficult," admitted Klopp, widely criticised for saying the Spurs game should be replayed because of the VAR shambles that disallowed a legitimate Luis Díaz goal. "When I spoke about the other game yesterday you proved to me how the world is. Everyone who was here heard what I said but everyone understood something else. That's OK. If I gave the impression that I was still in the game against Tottenham, I was not at all. We are over that. We are not children. It was not a problem to focus on this game. It was a problem to keep focused in the game and we got a bit sluggish, but that was nothing to do with the last game or the last week."

This was a memorable tie for the Mac Allister family. Carlos Mac Allister, a former professional with Argentinos Juniors and Boca Juniors, travelled to Merseyside along with several family members to watch two of his sons, Liverpool midfielder Alexis and Union defender Kevin, compete against each other for the first time in Europe. A proud, unforgettable moment for any family, no doubt, and one delayed for 45 minutes because Klopp named his World Cup-winning midfielder on the bench. The rotter.

There was no disputing the seriousness of the Liverpool manager's approach towards securing a comfortable position in the group as quickly as possible, however. Trent Alexander-Arnold returned from a month out with a hamstring injury to captain the side while Mohamed Salah, Darwin Núñez and Jota formed a strong front three. Alisson remained in goal after his Europa League deputy, Caoimhín Kelleher, sustained a knee injury in training.

Salah's sharpness almost brought Liverpool an early lead when Jarell Quansah, the emerging young centre-back, stopped Lazare Amani with a solid challenge near the halfway line. Quansah's tackle diverted the ball through the heart of Union's defence to Salah and it took a fine save from Anthony Moris to deny Liverpool the ideal start.

An offside flag – a correct one, no less – ruled out a tap-in from Núñez after Gravenberch stung Moris's palms with a blistering drive. The Uruguay international then missed a glorious chance when a surging run and measured pass from Harvey Elliott released Salah behind the Belgian defence. Salah's first time cross found Núñez inside the six-yard box but he sidefooted wide with Moris stranded.

Moris's confident display was spoiled by his part in Liverpool's inevitable breakthrough. Alexander-Arnold started the move when receiving Alisson's pass on the edge of his own area before motoring into the Union half. Following a swift exchange with Núñez, Liverpool's captain sent a low shot towards Moris's goal. The keeper, deceived by the flight of the ball, spilled it and Gravenberch was on hand for the simplest of finishes.

The visitors threatened to reward their boisterous 2,500 following sporadically, and the combination of Gustaf Nilsson's power and Mohamed Amoura's pace in attack kept the Liverpool defence on alert. Union's best chance of the first half came moments after falling behind. A neat touch from Nilsson sent his strike partner sprinting clear of Ibrahima Konaté and through on Alisson's goal. Amoura chipped the advancing Liverpool keeper but the effort lacked power and Konaté recovered to clear.

The Mac Allister family got the reunion they craved when Alexis entered the contest as part of a triple half-time substitution. The midfielder soon made an impact, floating a delightful cross on to the head of Jota who was thwarted by another Moris save. Liverpool were far from dominant in the second half and grateful to a confident finish from Jota when played through by Díaz for a relaxing end to a troubled week.

Liverpool
4-3-3
Alisson; Alexander-Arnold (Gomez 63), Konaté, Quansah, Tsimikas; Elliott, Endo (Mac Allister ht), Gravenberch (Szoboszlai 79); Salah (Jones ht), Núñez (Díaz ht), Jota

Union Saint-Gilloise
5-3-2
Moris; Castro-Montes, Mac Allister (Sykes 86), Burgess, Machida, Terho (Lapoussin 68); Amani (Rasmussen 75), Vanhoutte (Sadiki 75), Puertas; Amoura, Nilsson (Rodríguez 67)

Referee Morten Krogh (Den)

Pedro penalty earns Brighton first point in Europe after fightback

Marseille 2
Mbemba 19, Veretout 20

Brighton 2
Gross 54, João Pedro 88pen

Ed Aarons
Orange Vélodrome



▲ *João Pedro scores an 88th-minute penalty in Brighton's comeback*
MIKE HEWITT/GETTY IMAGES

Brighton's trip into the unknown was always going to be a steep learning curve. But Roberto De Zerbi's side recovered from the shock of conceding two goals in less than 90 seconds to Marseille's Chancel Mbemba and Jordan Veretout to secure a vital point thanks to a magnificent fightback capped by substitute João Pedro's equaliser from the penalty spot two minutes from full time.

It was the Brazilian's third penalty of the competition already after Pascal Gross had pulled one back early in the second half to begin the revival. While Brighton remain bottom of their group in their debut Europa League campaign after losing their opening match against AEK Athens, their response showed they belong at this level and kept hopes of progressing from the group stages very much still alive.

"We are not playing well and it is difficult to show our quality," De Zerbi said. "But in football it's important to play with heart, passion and the right behaviour.

"I'm really really proud of my players - this reaction is incredible."

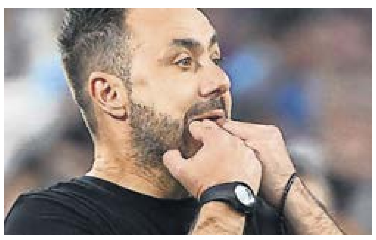
The Brighton chief executive, Paul Barber, had described their first taste of European football on the continent as "another test" for the club that has come so far in a short space of time. There can be few as intimidating atmospheres as the Stade Vélodrome for a Marseille home fixture, even if the French club's manager, Gennaro Gattuso, came into his first game at the venue with his new side having failed to win in their last five matches.

De Zerbi had stoked his personal rivalry with Gattuso before the match by saying that this game would be different to a Serie C playoff he lost while managing Foggia in 2016. Yet, he acknowledged that an element of stage fright had played a part in his side's disastrous start before they rescued a draw.

"It's possible we suffered from the atmosphere in our first away game and we have to get used to playing in this competition," De Zerbi said. "Maybe we have to have more confidence in ourselves."

Home supporters behind Jason Steele's goal unfurled a giant banner as the players emerged on to the pitch at the start with the words "Our hate, Our pride" that underlined their complicated relationship with the current side after a poor start to the season.

There are no such issues with Brighton, of course, although heavy traffic meant that even the intervention of the owner and chairman, Tony Bloom, could not help some visiting fans avoid a mad dash to the stadium under full police escort after the flight he was on was delayed and Bloom arranged for coaches to collect them from the airport.



▲ *Roberto De Zerbi was 'proud' to see his side recover against Marseille*

Both of Marseille's goals in the first half came down the left flank usually occupied by Pervis Estupiñán, with the injured Ecuador defender's replacement, Tariq Lamptey, left bamboozled by a great move that culminated in Mbemba sweeping home a cross from Jonathan Clauss. The second was almost a carbon copy after Lewis Dunk's botched clearance squandered possession and Veretout was able to double Marseille's lead from Amine Harit's cross after Steele failed to react quickly enough to his shot.

Confirmation that it was not going to be Brighton's night seemed to come soon after when referee Mykola Balakin awarded them a penalty for a handball, only to overturn it for a foul by Jan Paul van Hecke just beforehand after consulting the pitchside monitor.

Things could have got even worse for the visitors had Steele not been equal to Harit's effort from outside the area as the home side smelled blood.

An Ansu Fati header just before half-time from Mo Dahoud's precise chip that forced Marseille goalkeeper Pau López into serious action for the first time at least gave De Zerbi something to cling to at the break, with Danny Welbeck also coming close to reducing the arrears.

The lifeline Brighton were praying for eventually came 10 minutes into the second half when the determined Lamptey played in Kaoru Mitoma and his cutback was finished off first time by Gross.

Suddenly, Brighton managed to find their groove, prompting Gattuso to withdraw Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang in an attempt to shut up shop. Substitute Vitinha could have settled it 20 minutes from time for the home side after a quick breakaway, only for Dunk to save the day with a last-ditch tackle.

De Zerbi threw on João Pedro, Simon Adingra and Evan Ferguson as his side continued to press for an equaliser, with Mitoma drawing a good save from López at the end of a swift counterattack.

The Japan winger looked the most likely source of a goal but it was Lamptey who drew Clauss into a clumsy challenge inside the area and João Pedro kept his cool to make it a night to remember for Brighton and their fans.

Marseille
4-3-3
López; Clauss●, Mbemba, Balerdi●, Murillo; Rongier (Ounahi 51), Veretout, Correa (Sarr● 62); Ndiaye (Lodi 79), Aubameyang (Vitinha 62), Harit

Brighton
4-4-2
Steele; Veltman●, Van Hecke, Dunk●, Lamptey; March (Adingra 77), Dahoud (Gilmour 67), Gross●, Mitoma; Fati (João Pedro 67), Welbeck (Ferguson● 77)

Referee Mykola Balakin (Ukr)

Fifa gives Australia 25 days to counter Saudi World Cup bid

Jack Snape

Football Australia, state and federal governments and potential Asian co-hosts have been given 25 days by Fifa to decide whether they will bid for the 2034 men's World Cup.

The tight timeline was revealed on the same day an intention to host the tournament was announced by Saudi Arabia, which received the backing of Asia's most powerful football administrator.

Fifa released the bid timeline for the 2034 tournament early yesterday morning, setting a deadline of 31 October for potential bids to confirm their interest. The 2034 men's World Cup has been allocated by Fifa to bidders from Asia and Oceania. Football Australia chief executive, James Johnson, said his organisation is "exploring the possibility" of a 2034 bid.

"We acknowledge Fifa's communication regarding the Fifa World Cup 2034 and we are encouraged that after the hugely successful Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022 and Fifa Women's World Cup Australia and New Zealand 2023, the football family of Asia and Oceania will once again have the opportunity to showcase their ability to welcome the world and host the best Fifa tournaments."



▲ *Fifa wants bidders from Asia and Oceania for the 2034 men's World Cup*

Saudi Arabia, which has invested heavily in football in recent years, announced its intention to bid for the 2034 tournament within minutes of the Fifa announcement.

President of the Saudi Arabian Football Federation, Yasser Al Misehal, said "the time is right" for Saudi Arabia to host the World Cup.

"Our bid is driven by a love for the game and a desire to see it grow in every corner of the world," he said. "The Kingdom's transformation journey is the driving force behind our bid."

Saudi Arabia has drawn criticism from the international community for its human rights record and the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018. In recent years it has spent billions on sport in what critics have labelled "sportswashing".

The country will host the 2027 men's Asian Cup and has announced its intention to host the 2026 women's Asian Cup, for which it will face opposition from Australia.

Southgate voices his opposition to 2030 plan

Continued *from back page*

you do want to have them. We've got that responsibility of qualifying for the country but … I've been a player … I've never, ever taken a risk on a player's physical wellbeing. And nor would I."

Southgate also entered the VAR debate that continues to rage after the controversy of Saturday, when Liverpool's Luis Díaz had a goal wrongly disallowed at Tottenham after a blunder by the officials.

Southgate has never liked VAR, having been brought up to respect the referee's decision as final, even if there were doubts around it. He said that, in his experience, fans were suffering with VAR because they were kept in the dark during its interventions.

"All I would say is everybody used to go to the pub and moan about the ref and they still go to the pub and moan about the ref," Southgate said. "So I'm not sure what we've resolved, really. I'm probably a bit old-fashioned. The ref gives it as he sees it, let's crack on. We've got to deal with whatever happens."

Southgate's squad

Goalkeepers **Sam Johnstone** Crystal Palace, **Jordan Pickford** Everton, **Aaron Ramsdale** Arsenal
Defenders **Levi Colwill** Chelsea, **Lewis Dunk** Brighton, **Marc Guéhi** C Palace, **Harry Maguire** Man Utd, **John Stones** Man City, **Fikayo Tomori** Milan, **Kieran Trippier** Newcastle, **Kyle Walker** Man City
Midfielders **Trent Alexander-Arnold** Liverpool, **Jude Bellingham** Real Madrid, **Conor Gallagher** Chelsea, **Jordan Henderson** Al-Ettifaq, **Kalvin Phillips** Man City, **Declan Rice** Arsenal
Forwards **Jarrod Bowen** West Ham, **Phil Foden** Man City, **Jack Grealish** Man City, **Harry Kane** Bayern Munich, **James Maddison** Tottenham, **Eddie Nketiah** Arsenal, **Marcus Rashford** Man Utd, **Bukayo Saka** Arsenal, **Ollie Watkins** Aston Villa

Scotland 'not going to die wondering' in Ireland showdown

Robert Kitson
Paris

Short of thumping the top table in front of him, the Scotland captain, Jamie Ritchie, could not have made his point any more forcibly. "We're not going to die wondering," emphasised Ritchie, when asked how his side planned to knock over Ireland in this weekend's make-or-break Pool B fixture. "We've got to fire every bullet in our gun and play our best game. I know that if we put out our best performance we're in with a shot."

Just a few moments earlier, his head coach, Gregor Townsend, had sounded equally bullish after his side's relocation from Nice to the suburbs of Paris prior to tomorrow night's showdown with the world's No 1 ranked side. "The players have performed in massive games before when we were underdogs. We believe we're there mentally, physically and as a group … they're ready to play their best rugby."

Scotland, in short, know they have no option but to aim high and block out the loud roar of history. Blue has not been the colour in this fixture since 2017, the winner's circle an endless sea of green. The last time the two sides met at a World Cup, in 2019 in Yokohama, the final score was Ireland 27 Scotland 3. Scotland have not strung together consecutive wins in this fixture since the late 1990s.



Scotland hope return of Ali Price will unlock Ireland's defence

But eight successive Irish wins, in a curious way, has already crafted Townsend's pre-match speech for him. All he now wants is for his side to play up to the standard that has elevated them to fifth in the world rankings, instead of living down to other people's expectations. "We've broken records before … winning in Paris, winning in Twickenham [after] not beating England for a few years," stressed Townsend. "This is another opportunity for them to break a record."

Having named a familiar-looking side most notable for the return of the experienced Ali Price at scrum-half in place of Ben White, Townsend knows perfectly well there is no safety net available. His team will be heading home if they fall short of the required equation, the most basic being the need to win by eight points or more and deny Ireland a bonus point.

After that it gets more complicated but Townsend has made clear the first priority is to win. Buccaneering spirit did not get them far against South Africa in their opening pool game when they were beaten 18-3 but at least they learned a few salutory lessons. That day they put virtually all their eggs in Finn Russell's basket, only to see their fly-half repeatedly munched by the Boks' blitz defence. This time they will look to vary the point of attack slightly more and release the line-breaking talents of Duhan van der Merwe, Darcy Graham and Blair Kinghorn – winning his 50th cap – to greater effect.

The theory is that Price will assist this process. He is in good form, knows Russell well and his passing accuracy could help to unlock an Irish defence against whom every half-chance simply must be taken.

Equally, though, Scotland will need to be physical and clinical enough to stay in the fight and have picked a 6-2 bench with that intention in mind. If it is rough on the estimable Hamish Watson, the inclusion of the combative Luke Crosbie in the matchday 23 is another indication that Scotland do not intend to lie down meekly.

If you listen to the former Ireland lock Jean Kleyn, now back in the fold with his native South Africa, it will make for a feisty occasion as well as a high-profile one. "There's a little bit of animosity between the Irish and the Scots and there always has been, especially from a rugby perspective," suggested Kleyn, whose time in the Munster dressing room was clearly an educational one.

"At club level, you look at teams like Munster and Glasgow and there's always been this underlying … I wouldn't call it hatred but there's a little bit of knife in the back. For Ireland and Scotland it's even more so. Everything's a little bit closer to the bone and everything's a little bit more real. I think it's going to be a serious match."

If events go completely bonkers there is even a faint chance of South Africa being knocked out should both sides secure a try bonus point and Ireland lose by at least 21 points. If that sounds improbable, Scotland will be giving it the whole kitchen, never mind the sink. "We definitely want to be the team that goes out there fearless with nothing to lose," reiterated Townsend. Whatever the outcome, it is unlikely to be dull.

Scotland Kinghorn; Graham, Jones, Tuipulotu, Van der Merwe; Russell, Price; Schoeman, Turner, Z Fagerson, R Gray, Gilchrist, Ritchie (capt), Darge, Dempsey. **Replacements:** Ashman, Sutherland, Nel, Cummings, M Fagerson, Crosbie, Horne, Smith.

Henshaw out and a doubt

Ireland centre Robbie Henshaw is expected to be unavailable until at least the semi-finals of the Rugby World Cup with a hamstring injury. The Leinster player sustained the problem in training this week. Ulster's Stuart McCloskey has taken Henshaw's place among the replacements. PA Media

Ireland team to play Scotland
H Keenan; M Hansen, G Ringrose, B Aki, J Lowe; J Sexton (capt), J Gibson-Park; A Porter, D Sheehan, T Furlong, T Beirne, I Henderson, P O'Mahony, J van der Flier, C Doris. **Replacements** R Kelleher, D Kilcoyne, F Bealham, J Ryan, J Conan, C Murray, J Crowley, S McCloskey.

McKenzie zest leads All Blacks into last eight as Uruguay put up brave fight

New Zealand	**73**
Uruguay	**0**

Luke McLaughlin
OL Stadium

Under the radar, or undetectable? Perhaps the latter is more appropriate given New Zealand's stealth-bomber colours and the haka's flying V formation. The main thing is that the All Blacks have qualified for the quarter-finals and no one will fancy playing them. The crushing pre-tournament defeat by the Springboks and an opening-night loss against France have been consigned to history, and Ian Foster's side will meet Ireland, South Africa or Scotland in the last eight.

Eleven tries were scored against a Uruguay team who fought skilfully and kept their opponents out for the first quarter. Once New Zealand's passes began to stick, though, a rout was the inevitable result. The wing Leicester Fainga'anuku scored a second-half hat-trick but Esteban Meneses's side exit the tournament with their reputations enhanced.

"We've responded well from the first game [against France]," said Foster. "We took lots of lessons out of that … We've grown our game to a point that we'll go into this quarter-final really well prepared. Whatever happens it's going to be a massive game, but that's what quarter-finals should be like. We're ready."

The Uruguay head coach, Meneses, said he will take "a week or two with my family" before deciding his future after eight years in the job. "We gave everything," he said. "It was a great end to our World Cup – not just the play, the passion. What I will take away from this tournament is the sense of sacrifice shown by the team. The way they give their lives for the shirt, for their game, is admirable."

It was impossible to disagree, especially after that first quarter when the All Blacks' jet engines initially failed to fire. Cam Roigard's early knock-on cost them a try but it was not just their own inaccuracy; Uruguay tore into their task with a complete absence of fear, tackling hard and using the ball intelligently.

Manuel Ardao, the blindside flanker, was inches away from scoring a crowd-pleasing opener for *Los Teros* but was narrowly forced into touch. The All Blacks full-back Damian McKenzie then skipped over and touched down but again his side were denied when the TMO spotted a neck-grab by Richie Mo'unga. For Uruguay's fans, this spirited effort was all wonderful fun with respect to the 80-minute drubbing many had expected.

McKenzie finally succeeded in bashing the door down on 20 minutes, and a knock-on by Felipe Etcheverry immediately gave New Zealand a scrum, and field position for Mo'unga to breeze through. Things were happening whenever McKenzie got involved and an outrageous moment of skill brought New Zealand's third try, as he gathered a bouncing ball one-handed and flicked it inside to Will Jordan. The wing arrowed under the posts, and Mo'unga converted for 21-0. Jordan was nearly in again seconds later after his own sublime one-handed pick-up, before Roigard's try seconds before half-time secured the bonus point – and a place in the quarter-finals.

Fletcher Newell, who had replaced the injured Tyrel Lomax in the front row early on, barged across the try-line soon after half-time and Fainga'anuku soon scored the first of his three. Jordan and Tamaiti Williams also crossed and there was a stirring ovation for Sam Whitelock, taken off having won his 150th cap for New Zealand and setting a record of 23 World Cup appearances. Foster and his players will know in a couple of days who awaits them in the quarter-finals.

"Uruguay were 100% committed for 80 minutes," Foster said. "It was a little bit harder than perhaps what people think. I'm pleased, but we know there's going to be a big step up coming next week. We need to go out there, express ourselves, and give it everything." Under the radar? Not any more.

New Zealand
McKenzie, Jordan, Lienert-Brown, J Barrett (Clarke 53), Fainga'anuku, Mo'unga (B Barrett 63), Roigard (Christie 53); Tu'ungafasi (Williams 46), Taylor (Taukei'aho 46), Lomax (Newell 9), Whitelock (S Barrett 63), Vaa'i, Frizell (Blackadder 54), Cane (capt), Jacobson
Tries McKenzie 2, Newell, Mo'unga, Jordan 2, Roigard, Fainga'anuku, Williams
Cons Mo'unga 5, McKenzie 2, J Barrett 2

Uruguay
Silva, Mieres (Alonso 58), Inciarte, Vilaseca (capt), Freitas, Etcheverry (Berchesi 50), Arata (Ormaechea 60); Sanguinetti (Benítez 64), Kessler (Pujadas 64), Arbelo (Péculo 58), Dotti (Rodríguez 47), Leindekar, Ardao, Bianchi, Diana (Civetta 55)

Referee Wayne Barnes (Eng) **Attendance** 57,762



◀ *Damian McKenzie eyes a creative pass for New Zealand to unlock Uruguay*
PAUL CHILDS/RETUERS

England blow as Willis heads home early

Gerard Meagher

England have been dealt their first major injury blow at the World Cup with Jack Willis ruled out of the rest of the tournament with a neck problem. The head coach, Steve Borthwick, is due to confirm a replacement once medical checks are completed but Willis's departure from the squad is a setback given his prowess at the breakdown.

Willis sustained the injury during England's 71-0 win over Chile last time out and Borthwick said it was confirmed he would be withdrawing from the squad on Wednesday night. It is a bitter blow for Willis, who has endured a turbulent year following the demise of Wasps.

He has prospered since moving to Toulouse but will be unavailable for selection next year due to the Rugby Football Union's policy of not picking players based abroad. He had been given special dispensation but that runs out when he returns to Toulouse. Willis did at least appear against Chile, having missed out on the 23 against Argentina and Japan, and scored England's last try in Lille.

Borthwick is well stocked for options in the back-row positions but Sam Underhill would be the most experienced option. Tom Pearson, Alex Dombrandt and Tom Willis – Jack's brother – are all other possibilities, having been in camp over the summer. If Borthwick decides he does not need more back-row cover, the lock Jonny Hill is an option or he could even turn to Henry Slade, who is believed to have been in the reckoning when the coaching staff had concerns over Kyle Sinckler's fitness.

"Jack suffered an injury in the Test match versus Chile that he's worked to recover from and to rehab from," said Borthwick. "Unfortunately, he's been unable at this stage to be fit and what that means is that Jack has left the squad. We anticipate the injury will be just a few weeks but given the timescales we're operating in it means he will be replaced in the 23."



Simone Biles (above and right), Rebeca Andrade (black and gold leotard) and Britain's Jessica Gadirova

Brilliant Biles is No 1 again – can anyone stop her taking title?

US superstar has five world all-around titles but has stern competition from Rebeca Andrade and Jessica Gadirova

Tumaini Carayol
Antwerp

As one teammate, Joscelyn Roberson, was downed by a shock injury in the warm-ups and others were tense under the pressure of international competition, Simone Biles's first final back on Wednesday night gave an appropriate demonstration of the more underrated qualities that have made her so successful for so long.

Biles is certainly the best gymnast in the world, but the 26-year-old's success is also driven by the mental strength that has allowed her to win so consistently and under so much pressure. When her teammates needed her, she was there. Biles's all-around total in the team final was 58.732, 1.633 points higher than the second-best performer and she closed out the night with one of her best-ever floor routines.

Today Biles will try to win the world all-around title for a sixth time, a competition in which she remains unbeaten since her debut in Antwerp a decade ago. Between her scores in the qualification round and the team final – by far the two highest international all-around scores of this Olympic quad – and the strong mental state she appears to be in, Biles is the prohibitive favourite to maintain her dominance.

The question is whether anyone will come close enough to at least put her under pressure. The defending champion, Rebeca Andrade, is clearly the most capable. Andrade's trajectory remains one of the most satisfying in the sport's recent history. Despite the immense talent she clearly held as a junior, her potential was constantly stunted by injuries as she tore her anterior cruciate ligaments (ACL) on three separate occasions between 2015 and 2019.

By 2019, there were significant doubts about whether Andrade would ever be healthy enough to thrive. Instead, she returned just in time in 2021 to enjoy an incredible breakout Olympics in Tokyo, winning gold on vault and silver in the all-around, which have catapulted her to greater success. The world all-around title followed last year and on Wednesday she led Brazil to a historic team silver medal. In Biles's absence since Tokyo, she has been *the* gymnast of this period.

If Biles has taken women's gymnastics to impossible heights that few could have ever imagined, Andrade is the type of gymnast that many fans dreamed of. She combines her great power, amplitude, form, technique and grace across all four apparatuses with boundless charisma.

> ***Andrade returned in 2021 to enjoy an incredible breakout Olympics, winning gold and silver***

Last weekend, however, the second-highest qualifier was Shilese Jones, Biles's teammate, who at 21 years old has gradually improved to become a top all-around competitor, and is one of the numerous medal contenders. If she can control her extremely difficult Cheng vault, Great Britain's Jessica Gadirova will also be in contention for a medal, as is Mélanie de Jesus dos Santos after leading France to a team bronze medal.

At the US world selection camp last month, Jones came so close to beating Biles in a bizarre meet. After a nervous Biles made numerous mistakes, in the final rotation Jones stepped up to her favourite apparatus, the uneven bars, needing just an average routine in order to win. Instead, Jones made a massive, freak error, brushing her feet on the floor, which cost her a full point penalty and allowed Biles to take the win.

As in Tokyo, where Biles withdrew from five of six finals to focus on her mental health, the event underlined that she is human. But it also showed how difficult it is, physically and mentally, to outperform her even at her worst. If Biles performs well, she will win. If she feels the pressure, her rivals will likely still have to perform out of their skins just to keep up.

Japanese steel Hashimoto defends crown as rivals fall

Tumaini Carayol
Antwerp

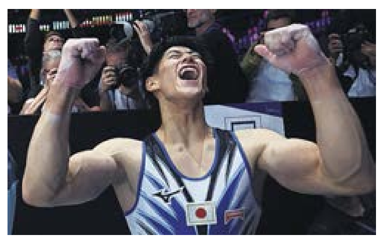
Daiki Hashimoto continued on his path to greatness as he recovered from a difficult start to defend his all-around title at the Artistic Gymnastics World Championships.

While a solid performance led Ukraine's Illia Kovtun to silver, the final descended into chaos at the close. China's Sun Wei, Kenta Chiba of Japan and Frederick Richard of the United States all began their final routines with a great chance to win a medal, but all three fell, with Richard becoming the first Black American man to win a world all-around medal.

Despite a bold, impressive performance as he chased down a medal throughout the night, Great Britain's Jake Jarman ran out of steam towards the end and finished in 13th position. A typically solid performance from James Hall, the veteran of the British squad, yielded an eighth place finish.

Two years ago in Tokyo, Hashimoto became the youngest men's gymnast to win the Olympic all-around title at 19 years old, which he followed up by winning the world title in Liverpool last year. In Antwerp, he had endured his struggles. Hashimoto actually failed to qualify for the final on merit after finishing in third place behind his two countrymen. Only two gymnasts per country can qualify but as his team's focal point, though, the Japanese agreed beforehand he would compete in the final regardless of results.

Hashimoto stumbled through his floor routine, finishing the first rotation 14th. From that early setback, though, the 22-year-old moved himself back up the rankings, ending with a nerveless horizontal bar routine.



▲ *Daiki Hashimoto celebrates defending the all-around world title*

Results

Football

EUROPA LEAGUE

Group A
Freiburg (0) **1** **West Ham** (1) **2**
Sallai 49 — Paquetá 8, Aguerd 66

Backa Topola 2 Olympiakos 2

Group B
Marseille (2) **2** **Brighton** (0) **2**
Mbemba 19, Veretout 20 — G roß 54, João Pedro 88pen

AEK Athens 1 Ajax 1

Group C
Aris Limassol (1) **2** **Rangers** (0) **1**
Moucketou-Moussounda 9, Babicka 59 — Sima 70

Real Betis 2 Sparta Prague 1

Group E
Liverpool (1) **2** **Union SG** (0) **0**
Gravenberch 44, Jota 90+2

Toulouse 1 LASK 0

Group D Raków 0 Sturm Graz 1; Sporting 1 Atalanta 2
Group F Macc Haifa 0 Panathinaikos 0; Villarreal 1 Rennes 0
Group G Roma 4 Servette 0; Slavia Prague 6 Sheriff 0
Group H Häcken 0 Qarabag 1; Molde 1 Bayer Leverkusen 2

EUROPA CONFERENCE LEAGUE

Group E
Aston Villa (0) **1** **Zrinjski Mostar** (0) **0**
McGinn 90+4

AZ Alkmaar 1 Legia Warsaw 0

Group G
Aberdeen (0) **1** **HJK Helsinki** (0) **1**
Miovski 79 — Radulovic 59

PAOK Salonika 2 Eintracht Frankfurt 1

Group A KÍ 0 Lille 0; Olimpija Ljubljana 0 Slovan Bratislava 1
Group B Breidablik 0 Zorya Luhansk 1; Gent 2 Mac Tel-Aviv 0
Group C Astana 1 Viktoria Plzen 2; Ballkani 2 Din Zagreb 0
Group D Besiktas 2 Lugano 3; Bodø/Glimt 0 Club Bruges 1
Group F Fiorentina 2 Ferencvarosi 2; Cukaricki 0 Genk 2
Group H Nordsjælland 7 Ludogorets 1; Trnava 1 Fenerbahce 2

Rugby union

WORLD CUP

Pool A	P	W	D	L	F	A	B	Pts
New Zealand	4	3	0	1	253	47	3	**15**
France	3	3	0	0	150	25	1	**13**
Italy	3	2	0	1	107	121	2	**10**
Uruguay	4	1	0	3	65	164	1	**5**
Namibia	4	0	0	4	37	255	0	**0**

New Zealand 73 Uruguay 0

Cricket

THIRD WOMEN'S T20 INTERNATIONAL

Brisbane Australia 190-9 (TM McGrath 65). West Indies 143 (HK Matthews 79). Australia beat West Indies by 47 runs.

Snooker

BETVICTOR ENGLISH OPEN (Brentwood)

Second round: L Brecel (Bel) bt M Asif (Pak) 4-0; **Y Zhou** (Chn) bt S Lam (Eng) 4-0; **A Carter** (Eng) bt J Kendrick (Eng) 4-0; **A Zhang** (Chn) bt E Slessor (Eng) 4-1; **J Ding** (Chn) bt G Wilson (Eng) 4-2; **H Liu** (Chn) bt C Wakelin 4-3; **R O'Sullivan** (Eng) bt J Si (Chn) 4-2; **M Williams** (Wal) bt D Emery (Wal) 4-2; **Third round: J Higgins** (Sco) bt O Lines (Eng) 4-1; **J Trump** Eng bt Y Sijun (Chn) 4-2

Tennis

ATP ROLEX SHANGHAI MASTERS (China)

First round: G Barrère (Fr) bt N Borges (Por) 6-2 6-2; **M Kukushkin** (Kaz) bt A Müller (Fr) 6-7 6-3 6-2; **L Sonego** (It) bt P Sekulic (Aus) 6-3 6-2; **C Tseng** (Tai) bt A Shevchenko (Rus) 3-6 6-3 6-2; **A Vukic** (Aus) bt R Carballés Baena (Sp) 6-4 7-6; **A Fils** (Fr) bt P Kotov (Rus) 6-1 6-4; **R Hijikata** (Aus) bt L Djere (Ser) 7-6 7-5; **B Zhukayev** (Kaz) bt S Napolitano (It) 7-5 7-5; **T Atmane** (Fr) bt J Thompson (Aus) 6-3 3-6 6-1; **M Arnaldi** (It) bt A Popyrin (Aus) 4-6 6-3 6-4; **Q Halys** (Fr) bt A Karatsev (Rus) 7-6 3-6 6-2; **B van de Zandschulp** (Neth) bt C O'Connell (Aus) 6-2 6-7 6-4; **D Schwartzman** (Arg) bt L van Assche (Fr) 5-7 6-3 6-2; **J Wolf** (US) bt P Cachin (Arg) 3-6 6-3 6-4; **S Ofner** (Aut) bt J Varillas (Per) 7-6 7-6; **Y Watanuki** (Jpn) bt J Shang (Chn) 7-6 4-6 6-4.

Greg Wood's racing tips

Hexham **1.25** Greenhill Gardens **2.00** Theirshegoes **2.35** Hajey **3.10** September Daisy **3.45** General Officer **4.20** Janeslittlevoice **4.55** Return Fire
Fontwell **1.45** Hipop Des Ongrais **2.20** King William Rufus **2.55** Sacre Coeur **3.30** Logistical **4.07** Brookie **4.40** Gambie Tiep **5.15** Beat The Heat
Ascot **2.12** Kimnkate **2.47** Scenic **3.22** Florida (nap) **3.57** Lmay **4.30** Sea Stone **5.05** Redemption Time (nb)
Newcastle **4.02** Written Broadcast **4.35** Artisan Dancer **5.10** Flying Fletcher **5.45** Colourful Dream **6.15** Eleven Eleven **6.45** Time To Rumble **7.15** Carbis Bay **7.45** Qaabil **8.15** Another Angel

Fixtures

Football
Sky Bet Championship
Birmingham v West Brom (8pm)
FA Women's Super League
Manchester Utd v Arsenal (7.30pm)

Rugby union (7.45 unless stated)
World Cup
Pool A France v Italy (8pm)

Rugby league
Betfred Super League
Catalans Dragons v St Helens (8pm)

Cricket
World Cup
Pakistan v Netherlands, Hyderabad (9.30am)

Vacant seats leave viewers feeling empty on opening day

Simon Burnton
Narendra Modi Stadium

Cricket World Cup organisers said they were happy with the attendance at the tournament's opening match between England and New Zealand despite the large expanses of empty seats in Ahmedabad that prompted a blend of criticism and derision from global onlookers. The England all-rounder Danielle Wyatt echoed the thoughts of many when she tweeted: "Where's the crowd?"

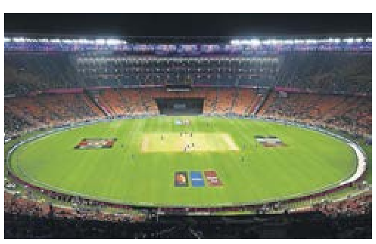
Television viewers were greeted by the sight of tens of thousands of empty seats as fans shunned the exposed lower tier of the world's second biggest sporting stadium on a baking hot October afternoon, and those with tickets elsewhere delayed their entry into the ground or decided to come only after the end of the working day.

The crowd grew through the day and, while organisers refused to confirm a final attendance, some 45,000 tickets had been sold, enough to make it the best-attended opening game of any 50-over World Cup, a figure that still barely made a dent in the 132,000-capacity Narendra Modi Stadium.

There were also some problems outside the ground, with those needing to collect their tickets - mainly foreign visitors who had been unable to supply an Indian address - being informed on arrival that the collection site was a hotel 20 minutes away.

The organisation of the World Cup has been criticised as chaotic, with the schedule finalised less than two months before the start of the tournament, and tickets going on sale only six weeks in advance. When England hosted the tournament in 2019 the final schedule was announced 13 months before its start, and tickets were sold out with more than six months to spare.

The decision to open the tournament with a fixture not involving the host nation on a weekday will be questioned, though organisers said there were strong reasons for doing so. But interest seemed lukewarm at best as a sparse scattering of spectators watched on as Sachin Tendulkar carried out the trophy before the start of play. The stands gradually filled during the afternoon but the areas most visible to viewers, particularly behind the bowler's arm - where tickets were most expensive - remained poorly populated throughout.



▲ *Narendra Modi Stadium is the world's second largest sports venue*

Ravindra revs up Black Caps attack



Jos Buttler and England can only watch as Rachin Ravindra hits a six
MATTHEW LEWIS/ ICC/GETTY IMAGES

England humiliated as supercharged Ravindra and Conway blast back

Simon Burnton
Narendra Modi Stadium

Count back *those* boundaries. For the record England hit 27 and New Zealand 38, but there was no need for spurious tiebreakers as, after restricting their opponents to 282, the Black Caps savaged the reigning 50- and 20-over champions during a response in which practically every over was super. The final game of the last World Cup provided England's cricket fans with some of their most treasured memories; the first of this one will have produced some of the most grisly.

New Zealand, meanwhile, will treasure those of Devon Conway, raising his bat to celebrate reaching 150, by battering another boundary in what was to be the penultimate over. They eventually cantered across the finish line with 82 balls to spare. There was no repeat of that famous day at Lord's in 2019 when the action moved to Ahmedabad: instead of shredded nerves there were shredded records, and instead of an England win by the narrowest of margins there was emphatic, unarguable, almost barbaric defeat.

Though many of the players who contested that thrilling final were present again here, it was New Zealand's newbies who took control. Conway and Rachin Ravindra, whose ODI debuts came in 2021 and this March respectively, did not so much chase their target of 283, they hunted it down. For the short period in which the outcome of this match was in doubt there was no separating them.



▲ *Adil Rashid fails to catch New Zealand's dominant Devon Conway*

Their synergy was such that five balls after Ravindra lifted Moeen Ali over midwicket for six to take himself to a half-century off 36 balls, Conway hit Adil Rashid for four to reach his own off precisely the same number of deliveries, and they eventually reached triple figures off 82 and 83 balls respectively. Conway dominated the closing phases of the game to end with 152 off 121, to Ravindra's 123 off 96.

After five overs New Zealand were 27 for one where England had been 26 without loss, but it was here that the two teams' paths definitively diverged. In only his ninth ODI innings, at his first World Cup, playing only because of Kane Williamson's knee injury and arriving at the crease with his team 10 for one, there had been every reason for Ravindra to feel nervous. Instead he took the knife on whose edge the game was briefly balanced, and started slashing.

He was imperious, reeling off a succession of stylish and sweetly timed strikes that rendered England's fielders irrelevant. Conway was better still. The 32-year-old had set the tone in the opening over, hitting a brace of boundaries off Chris Woakes. Woakes, England's opening-overs specialist, was hit out of the attack after delivering just three and leaking 27 runs. Mark Wood replaced him, and his first three overs went for 38.



Scoreboard

Ahmedabad New Zealand beat England by nine wickets

England		Balls	4	6
JM Bairstow c Mitchell b Santner	**33**	35	4	1
DJ Malan c Latham b Henry	**14**	24	2	0
JE Root b Phillips	**77**	86	4	1
HC Brook c Conway b Ravindra	**25**	16	4	1
MM Ali b Phillips	**11**	17	1	0
***†JC Buttler** c Latham b Henry	**43**	42	2	2
LS Livingstone c Henry b Boult	**20**	22	3	0
SM Curran c Latham b Henry	**14**	19	0	0
CR Woakes c Young b Santner	**11**	12	1	0
AU Rashid not out	**15**	13	0	1
MA Wood not out	**13**	14	0	0
Extras (w6)	**6**			
Total (for 9, 50 overs)	**282**			

Fall 40, 64, 94, 118, 188, 221, 229, 250, 252.

Bowling Boult 10-1-48-1; Henry 10-1-48-3; Santner 10-0-37-2; Neesham 7-0-56-0; Ravindra 10-0-76-1; Phillips 3-0-17-2.

New Zealand		Balls	4	6
DP Conway not out	**152**	121	19	3
WA Young c Buttler b Curran	**0**	1	0	0
R Ravindra not out	**123**	96	11	5
Extras (b4, lb1, w3)	**8**			
Total (for 1, 36.2 overs)	**283**			

Fall 10.

Did not bat DJ Mitchell, *†TWM Latham, GD Phillips, MS Chapman, JDS Neesham, MJ Santner, MJ Henry, TA Boult.

Bowling Woakes 6-0-45-0; Curran 6-2-47-1; Wood 5-0-55-0; Ali 9.2-0-60-0; Rashid 7-0-47-0; Livingstone 3-0-24-0.

Toss New Zealand elected to field.

Umpires K Dharmasena (Sri) N Menon (Ind).

Only one England batter demonstrated anything like the combination of fluency and attacking intent later shown by Conway and Ravindra - and that was Harry Brook, who managed to maintain it for only three balls. Theirs was a line-up crafted with batting depth in mind, and they were forced to plumb the darkest fathoms of it as they toiled in the heat.

They started sweetly enough, Jonny Bairstow lifting the second ball of the day over backward square leg for six, but far from being the precursor to an all-out batting assault there would be only half a dozen more maximums to come, and only one in the last 20 overs.

Despite the absence of Lockie Ferguson and Tim Southee, both injury-enforced, New Zealand never allowed any of England's batters to settle. Those injuries meant the Black Caps had no choice but to explore all available bowling options, but every card they turned was a trump. The excellence of Matt Henry and Trent Boult was hardly surprising - each bowled 10 overs, with one maiden, for 48 runs but Henry won 3-1 on wickets - though Glenn Phillips's impact was less predictable. The part-time spinner contributed only three overs but took two wickets for the first time in his ODI career, including Joe Root, the batter who anchored the England innings for 33 overs and faced more than twice as many deliveries as any of his teammates.

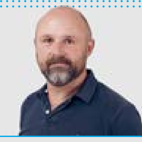
Ravindra took the knife edge the game balanced on and started slashing

Root eventually scored 77 before missing a reverse sweep and losing his leg stump, his attacking instincts having been curbed by the regularity with which he was losing batting partners. Root's partnership with Jos Buttler was the only one to yield more than 40 runs, as England concentrated on laying foundations until the point when they had to shift their focus to simply surviving their 50 overs.

The highlight of England's innings came in the 17th over, when Brook lifted Ravindra over mid-on for a four, a four and a six in successive deliveries. But having shifted into top gear he instantly stalled, trying the same shot again and this time lifting Ravindra straight to Conway in the deep - giving these two great friends and club teammates a first chance to suggest they might be about to click.

Analysis

Ali Martin



Ticket turmoil and fixture mess fuel game's existential crisis as hosts shrug their shoulders

They say you never get a second chance to make a first impression and in that respect, both England and the Cricket World Cup's organisers will hope theirs is not a lasting one.

This was a perky start to the tournament on the field at least, a resourceful New Zealand side brushing off injuries to three key men and serving up the dish best served cold. After the barest of margins at Lord's in 2019 came a hammering in the sequel, the stand-in captain, Tom Latham, marshalling an attack padded out with part-timers before Devon Conway and Rachin Ravindra ransacked a target of 283 in only 36.2 overs.

Conway is an old hand in these parts, his unbeaten 121-ball 152 very much forged in the heat of his Indian Premier League experience. Ravindra made for a simply delightful story. Aged just 23 and thus the youngest player among two ageing sides, the Wellington left-hander's 123 not out from 96 put his name up in lights in the country of his parents.

All told it was some statement, neatly summed up by Conway registering New Zealand's fastest World Cup century from 83 balls only to see it fall to his apprentice by one ball moments later. And it will probably have been welcomed by the officials in the ground after the scenes that were beamed around the world earlier in the day.

Sure, we got Sachin Tendulkar escorting the trophy out to the middle before the toss at the Narendra Modi Stadium, his suit sharp and his hair remarkably luxuriant. The little master looks in excellent nick aged 50, as if he could simply buckle up those trademark old pads, pick up that railway sleeper of a bat and peel off another frictionless century.

We also had the reassuringly familiar sounds of Ian Smith, Nasser Hussain and Ian Bishop to start with on commentary. Having deftly shepherded folks through that stomach-churning finale four years ago, the trio's reunion in the box very much added to the rematch vibe that the International Cricket Council was so keen to riff on.

But all this appeared to be occurring in a vacuum. No sport does an existential crisis quite like cricket and at a time when the 50-over format's future is being debated - despite television rights having already been sold until the men's ODI World Cup in 2031 - the sight of empty orange stands for the first ball was more fuel to the fire.

There are, as always, a few caveats and mitigations. If the ICC is to be believed, this ended up as a record crowd for an opening match in a men's 50-over World Cup; a final gate of more than 47,000 but in a 135,000-capacity stadium. The day-time temperatures were clearly a factor, the handful who were present sticking to the shadier parts and the majority not arriving until the mercury had dropped. And for all the love of cricket in India, even factoring in the greater ubiquity created by the IPL's rise, it was always wildly optimistic that a ground that holds more than Lord's, Edgbaston, Headingley, Old Trafford and the Oval combined would be a good fit for these two teams.

It was strange India were not deployed to light the touchpaper - the favourites do not start until Sunday

You also have to go back to 1996 for the last time the hosts did not start the tournament. It was strange therefore that India were not deployed to light the touchpaper, with Rohit Sharma's favourites not starting until Sunday's encounter with Australia in Chennai.

But even accepting the illusion of a regular crowd looking poor in a gargantuan stadium, it still wasn't a great look and followed some questionable organisation. Though seemingly not exorbitant price-wise, tickets were not placed on sale until 25 August - only 42 days ago. And the fixtures themselves weren't released until a month before that and have been tinkered with since.

Whether an earlier release of tickets and fixtures would have boosted the number of travelling supporters is up for debate but any self-respecting host would have surely wanted to find out.

The impression given here, accurate or otherwise, is of the Board of Control for Cricket in India not caring. Reports of spectators arriving on the day and being told they needed to travel to a hotel some 20 minutes away to collect tickets only added to this.

The same cannot be said of England but they played nothing like defending champions. Jos Buttler brushed off that term, in fact, insisting his players wanted to attack this tournament. The upshot? A timid performance that was so brutally swept aside by the end it could easily come back to haunt them should net run-rate enter the equation.

As for New Zealand, not for the first time they have entered a tournament unfancied and, going by first impressions, this is once again looking questionable.

MCC bans member

Lord's clash leads to punishments

The MCC has expelled one member and handed out lengthy suspensions to two others involved in an incident that occurred in the Long Room on day five of the second Ashes Test at Lord's.

A flashpoint between Australian batters Usman Khawaja and David Warner and MCC members on 2 July was caught by television cameras as the players walked off for lunch not long after the controversial dismissal of England's Jonny Bairstow by wicketkeeper Alex Carey.

Australia's captain, Pat Cummins, later stated his team experienced "aggressive and abusive" behaviour, which prompted an apology from the MCC and a promise to conduct a full investigation.

It has now been announced that the MCC's disciplinary process has ended and a panel has decided on penalties due to the actions of the three individuals falling "well below the behaviour expected" from members.

One MCC member has been expelled owing to "abusive, offensive or inappropriate behaviour or language", while another is suspended for four and a half years and the other individual involved will serve a 30-month suspension.

"Details of the disciplinary process are confidential, and the club will not be publishing the names of the three individuals who have been sanctioned," an MCC statement read.

"The actions of the three individuals in the pavilion on the day in question fell well below the behaviour expected from our members. The penalties set out are the consequences of breaching the club's code of conduct. MCC will not be making any further comment on the matter at this time."

In the aftermath of the incident, MCC chair Bruce Carnegie-Brown set out a list of protocols. These included expanding the roped-off area where players walk through as they make their way from the dressing room to the pitch and back again, while members will be prohibited from using the stairwell when the teams are coming on and off the field and must either wait at the ground or top floor level.

Carnegie-Brown also called upon members to police one another's behaviour, as well as reacquainting themselves with the organisation's code of conduct. **PA Media**

Off the mark
Gravenberch celebrates first Liverpool goal in Euro stroll



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All Biles?
American aims to win sixth all-around world crown



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Friday
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2023

Sport

‘I’m not a fan’
Southgate hits out at World Cup on three continents

David Hytner

Gareth Southgate says he fears for the sporting integrity of the three-continent World Cup in 2030. Fifa announced on Wednesday that the tournament had been awarded to Spain, Portugal and Morocco but that Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay would host the opening three matches.

Southgate said he was “not sure what they’ve got in mind for that” and joked he would surely be well out of his job as the England manager by then. “I should enjoy an invite to Buenos Aires as a TV pundit if that’s the plan,” he said.

Southgate pulled no punches with his concerns when he took a deeper, more analytical look. Fifa has indicated that it will factor in rest and recovery time after the ties in South America.

Spain’s acting sports minister, Miquel Iceta, said yesterday that the final would probably be held in his country, although within hours the head of Morocco’s football federation, Fouzi Lekjaa, revealed the goal was for it to be in Casablanca. Also yesterday Argentinian officials said the country would “go for more” games than the single match allocated.

“My big thing is I don’t quite get the integrity of the competition,” Southgate said. “You would have to play one game … I’d need to see it all laid out but my understanding is three matches played in South America, then those teams have to travel across the globe, change timezone again, and pick up the competition with home advantage in one part of the group and not another part.

“I know we had that a little bit with the last Euros but that would seem quite disjointed and [a] different landscape for different teams in different groups. So from what I’ve seen, I’m not a fan.

“Argentina in Buenos Aires would not be great. Logically, you could play Argentina in Buenos Aires and have to travel back. There is a big difference between playing Argentina in Buenos Aires and playing them in Casablanca. That is a significant change to the competition.”

Southgate was speaking at his squad announcement for England’s friendly against Australia next Friday and the Euro 2024 qualifier with Italy four days later; both games are at Wembley. John Stones returns after injury and Southgate has also recalled Jarrod Bowen and Ollie Watkins.

Ben Chilwell, Eberechi Eze and Callum Wilson miss out through injury – Reece James and Luke Shaw are still sidelined – and Raheem Sterling is again overlooked. Southgate did not recall the fit-again Mason Mount, saying the midfielder had not “done enough to be in ahead of the others”, and he was unable to name a specialist left-back, confirming that Levi Colwill was “very much” an option there, along with Kieran Trippier.

Southgate has picked Bukayo Saka, who is an injury doubt for Arsenal’s Premier League game at home to Manchester City on Sunday and, as such, for England, too. Southgate would like Saka to join up and he essentially pleaded with Arsenal to trust him over the player’s wellbeing. Arsenal would prefer that Saka had a rest. They have played him in 87 consecutive league games.

“Bukayo is in contention for the weekend and we’ve obviously got a very important qualifier,” Southgate said. “The clubs have trust in us that we make decisions that are right for the long term whenever we can. We only have 10 matches a year. And there’s been times when … Bukayo, for example, hasn’t always played.

“But there are certain key games where, if it’s possible to have your best players, then 37 →



Gareth Southgate says the choice of venues is significant



Devon Conway (left) and Rachin Ravindra shared an unbroken 273-run stand against England
MATTHEW LEWIS/ ICC/GETTY IMAGES

Buttler vows to bounce back as England fluff opening lines

Simon Burnton
Narendra Modi Stadium

Jos Buttler said England had been “completely outplayed” as their World Cup campaign started with a nine-wicket humbling by New Zealand but said the result was not evidence that his side’s crown had slipped – just that they are human.

“We’re not robots,” Buttler said. “Sometimes you don’t play as well as you’d like. Everyone’s working hard, everyone’s prepared well, we were just a little bit off. In international cricket if you’re a bit short and the opposition play well you’re going to lose. But it’s one loss. It’s a tough one but we’ll be better for the next one.”

Devon Conway scored 152 and Rachin Ravindra 123, both unbeaten, as the Black Caps sprinted across the finish line with 82 balls remaining – dealing a savage blow not just to England’s confidence but to their net run-rate. But Buttler’s side won the 2019 World Cup, played using the same format as this year’s event, despite losing three of their nine group games.

“Whether you lose by a run or like that it is one loss, at the start of a very long tournament. That’s what I’ll be encouraging everyone to remember,” Buttler said. “We were outplayed but we’ve got a lot of experience in the room, guys who’ve faced defeats like that before. When we win a game we don’t get too high, and we don’t get too low when we lose.”

Buttler said he too would have chosen to bowl had he won the toss, and that the pitch appeared to become easier to bat on as the game progressed, but said England’s batting had been poor. They toiled to a total of 282 for nine, becoming the first ODI team – male or female – in which all 11 players reached double figures. “We weren’t clinical enough with our shot-making and gifted New Zealand a few wickets,” he said.

Match report *Page 40* →

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Yes, stop kids smoking – but don't let vapes suck them in *Gaby Hinsliff, page 3*

True beauty in decay: why Withnail and I still resonates *Max Wallis, page 4*

Robert Jenrick's perverse fix for the care workforce crisis *Letters, page 5*

G2 Daily pullout life & arts section *Inside*

The Guardian **Friday 6 October 2023**

Journal

Opinion and ideas



ILLUSTRATION: ALICE AND THE INK

Desperate and dogmatic: is this the end of the Tory line?

Andy Beckett



What does the prospect of losing power mean for a party that feels it was born to rule? That question has been haunting the Conservatives for almost two years, ever since Boris Johnson's administration started to unravel with the Owen Paterson and Partygate scandals in late 2021 – the period when a probably decisive proportion of voters began to conclude that they had had enough of Tory government for now.

These have been frantic years for the party, full of policy U-turns, the emergence of new factions, leadership contests, cabinet reshuffles, changes of political strategy and increasingly desperate promises to voters – such as Rishi Sunak's this week to end "30 years" of "broken" politics and "fundamentally change our country".

Yet despite all this activity, all these acknowledgements that the Tories are in trouble, they seem not to have got fully used yet to their new political situation: as a widely disliked, at least temporarily declining force, on a downward trajectory that may not end at the election. The scale of Sunak's latest pledge, and of many others made at the Conservative conference this week, from the fringe to the main stage, suggests a party that still thinks it can do anything if it really tries.

The last time a period of Tory rule ended was so long ago, in the late 90s, that since becoming MPs, most leading Tory politicians, from Sunak to Suella Braverman to Liz Truss, have known nothing but Tory or Tory-dominated governments. The party has also operated in an even more favourable media environment than usual, with the Tory press in a particularly tribal phase, new rightwing broadcasters starting up, reactionaries busy on social media and the previously troublesome BBC often cowed or compromised by Conservative appointees. By bullying other independent institutions such as the civil service, bending or breaking the law and Westminster conventions, and making it harder for anti-Tory sections of the electorate such as the young to vote, the Conservatives have further concentrated power in themselves. For 13 years they have brazenly demonstrated why they are one of the most ruthless parties in the democratic world.

But in the end it hasn't worked. This week's party conference was sickly with

Desperate and dogmatic: is this the end of the Tory line?

Andy Beckett

← Continued from front

signs of power draining away: a thin attendance, fewer corporate exhibitors, a shrunken hall for the main speeches, and empty spaces all round the cavernous Manchester Central convention complex. Sometimes only the number of police there and in the surrounding streets made it clear that this was a gathering of a governing party, not a frustrated opposition. Even the fact that it was scheduled before the Labour gathering felt like a demotion - although the switch was actually caused by Labour venue-booking problems. Instead of the Tories, Labour will get the last word.

There is also a hint of defeat in the Conservatives' clunky new slogan, "long-term decisions for a brighter future", with its implication that in the shorter term the government's policies are not going to be appreciated. For a party that has so often relied on pre-election booms and tax cuts, and other cynical last-minute manoeuvres, to start talking about the long term is an inadvertent admission of failure.

Another unintentionally revealing feature of the conference was the overwhelming proportion of speakers arguing that the solution to the party's problems was to move further rightwards. Even Penny Mordaunt, previously a rare Tory leadership contender who did not always try to sound as rightwing as possible, opted for a crude Margaret Thatcher impression, urging the party to "stand up and fight" against "the iron fist" of the unions, as if she was addressing a Tory conference 40 years ago. Such speeches are meant to signal assertiveness and defiance, but feel more like a party retreating into its comfort zones, to hold on to its elderly core support, avoid an electoral rout and have something to build on afterwards.

The last time a Tory conference took place with a loss of power looming was in 1996, the year before Tony Blair's first landslide. John Major was as stiff a public speaker as Sunak but rather more relatable. He made a tired speech condemning benefit dependency and attacking Labour as unprincipled, themes that were endlessly recycled by ministers this week. Not much sign of Sunak's new politics there.

That gathering was mentioned by Jacob Rees-Mogg at a launch event for the New Conservatives, a new, ultra-traditionalist party within a party, with a highly optimistic echo in its name of New Labour. "I remember we were a desert of ideas in 1996," he said. "Now we are an oasis of them." It was meant to be a typical bit of Rees-Mogg bravado. But it was telling that he had felt required to draw the contrast. All through the conference, the ghosts of his party's three consecutive election defeats starting in 1997 drifted round the chilly convention hall.

Partly because many Tories still have contempt for Keir Starmer, there is an unspoken assumption in the party that its time in opposition will not be lengthy. This helps explain the intensity of the barely hidden competition to replace Sunak: whoever wins expects to be prime minister.

Starmer's lack of rapport with the public so far, and the great problems that any premiership of his is likely to inherit, can make this confidence seem justified. But if he proves better at government than opposition, which his record as a capable head of organisations suggests he might be, then the media excitement that still surrounds every twist in the Tory leadership saga, and the Tory soap opera generally, may dwindle. Their conferences could go back to what they were in the late 90s and early 00s: targets of mockery, homes of lost causes, places where politics slows right down.

We're not there yet. For now, the Tories remain in a contradictory state: self-doubting but self-important, desperate for new ideas but dogmatic in their principles, probably on the way out but still wielding great power. To judge by the many glum and pensive faces in conference audiences this week, this state is not comfortable. But many Tories believe that opposition would be much worse. To avoid it, Britain's party of power before all else may do almost anything.

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High-speed rail

Cancelling HS2 deepens the UK's regional divides and worsens the inequality gap

Flying into Granada for the European political community summit yesterday, Rishi Sunak may have noticed that the Andalusian city is well served by high-speed trains. Granada is not alone. Spain now has the largest high-speed rail network in Europe, with more than 4,300km of track in operation and a further 1,370km under construction. Britain, by contrast, has 113km in operation and, before Mr Sunak's cancellation of the northern arm of HS2 this week, a further 220km under construction. High-speed rail is an infrastructural triumph for Spain, but a disaster for Britain.

True, Spain is much larger and emptier; Britain is smaller, more crowded and more built-up. But the contrast in the governance and management of the respective projects matters too. Spain essentially gave its state railway infrastructure company the money to build the lines. Britain did not do the same. Instead, with HS2, it started, stopped, started, stopped, hesitated, re-examined, dithered, rethought, cut back and, finally this week, cancelled. It has been a systemic failure.

It did not help that HS2 was started at the wrong end. Rather than beginning work in the north, where the project was principally aimed, it began in the south-east, where the most difficult and most expensive engineering was required in order to carve a route from the centre of London out through the Chiltern hills. One upshot of the cancellation is therefore that HS2 has become another project that will principally benefit the richest part of Britain. Instead of levelling up, HS2 extends the inequality gap.

In his conference speech and interviews, Mr Sunak claims that this will benefit the north. He says spending "every penny" on a range of rail and road upgrades means a better deal than HS2 would have delivered. This is nonsense. The simple truth - as Spain illustrates - is that the two are not alternatives. As originally conceived, HS2 was part of a UK-wide transport modernisation, to be integrated with the so-called HS3 of new and upgraded rail lines in the north. The one depended on the other. But the upgrades announced by Mr Sunak on Wednesday as an alternative to HS2 are not confined to the north and Midlands. So the north will lose out twice.

Mr Sunak tried to promote himself this week as a long-termist leader. The debacle over HS2 tells the opposite story. The cancellation is not merely a piece of short-term thinking, leaving the project half finished. It is also a choice made in a strategic vacuum. It leaves the transport capacity building that was the core reason for building HS2 high and dry - and unsolved. The result will be more crowded roads, more accidents, increased delays and worse pollution. Any benefits are likely to be years away.

The cancellation exposes Britain's crippling lack of an industrial strategy, a term of which Mr Sunak positively disapproves. Its political and market consequences are likely to be dire. The decision is bound to deter future governments from promoting other infrastructure projects for fear of cancellation, and to discourage future investors from investing in them either. Just at the very time when other countries, most prominently the United States and China, are showing few qualms about building infrastructure for the future and attracting the investment that such plans require, Britain has again set itself apart.

HS2 was never an easy sell, especially environmentally. In the end though, and as David Cameron said after the cancellation, HS2 was also about investing for the future, bringing Britain closer together, creating a more balanced economy, and strengthening the north. These were big goals, worth having, and they have now been thrown away. The verdict of history on what Mr Sunak did this week will rightly be harsh.

Climate emergency

Record-breaking heat has left scientists aghast. Politicians must respond

Another month of smashed temperature records has left scientists searching for words with which to describe what is happening. "Gobsmackingly bananas" was the phrase alighted on by Zeke Hausfather of the Berkeley Earth climate data project. This was the hottest September on record, following the hottest August and the hottest July. It beat the previous September record by 0.5C, the largest jump in temperature ever seen.

In the UK, where the summer was wet and many people have enjoyed unseasonably warm early autumn days, the disruption has not been anything like as destructive as elsewhere. But floods, fires and exceptionally high temperatures are becoming more and more frequent - with the overflow of Lhonak Lake in India, and the wildfires and baking heat in Tenerife among the latest emergencies.

The countdown to the latest round of UN climate talks, which start in Dubai in late November, has begun. On Wednesday, Pope Francis issued an update to his 2015 encyclical - a document aimed at Catholics worldwide - warning that "the world in which we live is collapsing" and calling for "irresponsible" western lifestyles to change. More than 80 countries are pushing for a phaseout of fossil fuels to be on the Cop28 agenda. But leaders of the biggest-emitting countries, including Joe Biden and Xi Jinping, were absent from a summit convened by António Guterres, the UN secretary general, in New York last month.

As Mr Guterres has warned, oil companies and states are lobbying hard against attempts to close down their businesses. Saudi Arabia's huge recent investment in football is part of a strategy aimed at increasing its influence and muting opponents. Last year, Saudi Aramco, which is largely state-owned, made a profit of $161bn (£134bn) - the biggest ever recorded by an oil and gas firm.

The actions of the oil companies and petrostates are one thing. But so far, the actions of governments across the rich world have failed to match their words on net zero. Even now, as scientists admit that they are stunned by the latest data, there is no guarantee that greenhouse gases will stop rising by 2025, as experts believe they must if there is to be any chance of limiting temperature rises to 1.5C.

Under Rishi Sunak, the UK's ambitions have slipped. Last month, he watered down commitments on phasing out petrol cars and gas boilers, while ministers at his party's conference used inflammatory rhetoric to play up public fears that decarbonisation is unaffordable. But other governments too are showing a disturbing lack of engagement. With a recent proposal for a windfall tax on the oil and gas revenues of countries with the largest deposits, the UK's former prime minister, Gordon Brown, went further than the current leaders of any big western states have done recently. No wonder that the governments of some of the poorest countries, which are most threatened by global heating and have contributed least to the problem, are angry.

As Pope Francis said, "we can keep hoping". The high temperatures are frightening, but could be used by responsible politicians to build the momentum that is needed for an accelerated green transition.



Vapes for sale in London

PHOTOGRAPH: VUK VALCIC/ZUMA PRESS WIRE/SHUTTERSTOCK

Yes, stop kids smoking – but don't let vapes suck them in

Gaby Hinsliff



Once upon a time, a crafty fag behind the bike sheds was the mark of a teenage rebel. But not any more, which is why the vast majority of British 15-year-olds will be singularly unbothered about becoming the last generation legally allowed to buy cigarettes. A princely 3% of them smoke, a habit now widely regarded as for old people.

One in five girls that age, however, use candy-coloured, sweet-flavoured vapes. They're cheaper, just as easily bought underage, and don't make your hair smell horrible. So why persevere with raspy throats and ash on the carpet when they can get a nicotine fix that tastes of bubblegum or banana, from a device dinky enough to hide in a school blazer pocket? (The patronising old marketing advice to "shrink it and pink it" – create a handbag-sized, pastel version – if you want to sell to women could have been designed for the vape market, where young women now outnumber men; the reverse was true of tobacco.)

There's something both rebellious and oddly innocent-looking about vaping, a perennially appealing combination to teenage girls. They know smoking kills, but puffing on a strawberry e-cigarette seems barely more dangerous than sucking the end of your Hello Kitty pen in primary school, despite the worrying questions hanging over vaping's unknown long-term effects and over high levels of toxic heavy metals in some cheap devices. When scientists tested a haul confiscated at one school in Kidderminster, Worcestershire, they found children using them could have been inhaling more than double the daily safe amount of lead and nine times the safe amount of nickel.

None of this is to decry Rishi Sunak's plan to raise the age for buying cigarettes by one year every year, until the habit is eventually ground out. He has taken commendable political risks in pushing for it against libertarian objections, for this isn't just about teenagers but about accelerating the process by which smoking starts to feel like a bizarre hangover from the past. Once the legal age for buying fags hits 35, say, will corner shops really be solemnly asking 34-year-olds for their ID? Or will we by then have concluded it's easier to just ban sales completely, or restrict them to specialist outlets alongside medical advice on giving up? The rarer smoking becomes, the easier it is to restrict with no great outcry – by outlawing it in outdoor public spaces, perhaps, or reducing the nicotine content of tobacco products, as they're planning in New Zealand (which is also incrementally raising the age limit).

> **Marketing vapes as a boring, clinical tool – no sexier than a blister pack of nicotine gum – seems thoroughly sensible**

Though health charities are delighted by it, this policy is not an answer to the Tories' existential problems, so making it the centrepiece of Sunak's last conference speech before the election suggests that rarest of things: a senior politician doing something because he actually thinks it's right, backed up by a junior one (in public health minister Neil O'Brien) adept at driving ideas forward. Yet the knottier problem of vaping remains, and that's where the public health message begins to get unhelpfully complicated.

For smokers trying to quit, any risk from vaping is almost certainly smaller than the known deadly risk of still smoking, which is why the NHS advises that switching to vaping is much the healthier option. But if you've never smoked, then carrying on avoiding nicotine in all forms would be best. Public health experts worry that vaping is simply leading a generation of kids who wouldn't otherwise smoke down a different and not risk-free path to nicotine addiction. Were we to find out decades hence that vaping is worse for you than suspected, by then we'd have a population already too hooked to give it up easily. And if that sounds familiar, it's roughly what happened with cigarettes.

In Manchester, Sunak also repeated a promise to crack down on vaping, with a planned consultation on restricting disposable vapes – a market notoriously flooded with cheaply made, counterfeit and black-market versions, prone to contain illegally high levels of nicotine or potentially harmful amounts of heavy metals – and regulating flavours and packaging so they don't appeal to children. Forcing manufacturers to market vapes as the boring, clinical tool for helping adult smokers that they're actually supposed to be – no sexier than a blister pack of nicotine gum and definitely not mango ice blast-flavoured – seems thoroughly sensible. Combining that with ramping up enforcement and safety checks to disrupt the black market in illegal e-cigarettes, to protect the health of those already hooked, could well make a difference.

But the risk is of this consultation going the same way as Boris Johnson's obesity strategy – hyped up by its creator, challenged by Liz Truss and finally delayed by Sunak – or the other big public health strategy for protecting children's lungs: cracking down on air pollution caused by cars. It's relatively easy to face down big tobacco, an industry that knows it's dying and has now made its succession plans accordingly. But manufacturers will lobby ferociously to protect the booming market in e-cigarettes into which they've diversified. The longer governments drag their feet, the more kids will take up vaping, sucking chemicals into developing lungs with potential long-term consequences we have yet to understand – and one with which we're already very familiar: that of being suckered into an expensive lifelong nicotine dependency. And all the watermelon flavouring in the world can't sweeten that deal.



True beauty in decay: Withnail still resonates

Max Wallis



I was 17. It was July and it was boiling. Sweat made a snail-like progress down my neck – but I didn't care. My swishy, three-quarter-length coat was half my personality. They would have had to surgically remove it from me. I was dressed for action. The particular action I wanted was what I had seen on a shady DVD version of Withnail & I a few months earlier. I wanted booze and drugs, and to cause outrage in provincial tearooms. In fact, I just looked like a dick, and wouldn't have known weed from oregano. Still, the film left an imprint like a branding iron.

I was one of many, obviously. None more so than Toby Benjamin, whose latest book, Withnail & I: from Cult to Classic, charts the journey of a film that was initially a flop, gained a following among students – with their propensity to pass around VHS copies – and then assumed a granite-like position in the culture, comparable to the King James Bible or Cilla Black. It speaks to us as clearly today as it did when it was released in 1987. In straitened times, excess and *débauche* sometimes seem the only answer to harsh reality. What else is there to do, after all? Maybe that's why it still resonates.

The film is set at the fag end of the 1960s. After a multi-day bender, Withnail (Richard E Grant) and Marwood (played by Paul McGann, who looks like a nymph created by Donatello) retreat to a country cottage owned by Withnail's uncle. The house has an outdoor lav, no sticks for the fire and a want of electricity. But what it does have is a supporting cast of local loons. A poacher threatens them with a half-dead eel, a drunken publican gives them free drink, they make a mutiny in central Penrith, and Marwood has to bat off the unwanted advances of Uncle Monty, whose hands seem to move more quickly than his portly frame would imply.

Then the denouement comes, in which Marwood gets the central role in a play and they return to London. The relationship between the two is all over now. "I shall miss you, Withnail," Marwood says, with a touch of his shoulder. And then he's gone. Cue tears, rain and a random dog in shot who doesn't seem to know his visage will be committed to celluloid for ever.

This is an age of rackety behaviour. Withnail is a story about rackety behaviour. More than that, it is about decay and disdain for the authorities that contrive to make us miserable. And who can say they haven't felt the misery of life now? Walk down the high street in Stoke-on-Trent, or past Hackney Walk, that ill-starred parade of gold-fronted shops and £100m hubris in the capital, and marvel at the mismanagement by our rulers. Who doesn't want to threaten Rishi Sunak with an eel freshly poached in Penrith?

Withnail taught me many things. I might not have understood the film when I first saw it. But the sense of freedom, even if ill-conceived, spat at me like water from a fatted pan. These were my people. I recognised the nihilism, the attraction of necking booze from the bottle at lunch, and the hard, unspoken words of love.

The endlessly quotable lines in Withnail built its own particular vernacular brick by brick; a whole world of phrases. To repeat them, to guy your friends with them, to entice the people you want to shag with them, is to enter into the spirit of the film, and to enter into the spirit of the film is to find that at times you will be Withnail and at times you will be Marwood.

Never a week goes by that my boyfriend – often when in drink – doesn't shout: "We've gone on holiday by mistake!" Reader, we had not gone on holiday. To recognise that is to recognise yourself, and to recognise life as you spin through it: sometimes in control but more often than not at the whim of the world and those around you.

Uncle Monty, in a rare moment of clear-sightedness, says: "Oh, my boys, my boys, we're at the end of an age … Shat on by Tories, shovelled up by Labour. And here we are, we three; perhaps the last island of beauty in the world."

Who hasn't felt, and who doesn't want to feel, as if they are the last speck of kindness in this cruel world?

✻ **Max Wallis** *is a writer and poet*


Paul McGann, left, and Richard E Grant in Withnail and I
PHOTOGRAPH: PICTORIAL PRESS LTD/ ALAMY

Letters

Established 1906

Country diary

Teesdale, North Pennines

A month after the combine's visit, this field still tells a tale of a difficult harvest: decayed, scattered sheafs of wheat, flattened by wind and rain, which escaped under the cutter bar. Gleaners – wood pigeons, sparrows, field mice, rooks – did well this year, but spilt grain that they missed has germinated. A green haze of young wheat leaves is rising through the sun-bleached stubble.

Soon, the plough will carve its brown corduroy furrows, preparation for resowing. Until then, there's time to enjoy a glorious autumn flowering of cornfield annuals beside the footpath. Scentless mayweed, field pansy, cut-leaved cranesbill, constant companions to cultivated crops, are thriving in the bare earth. The scarlet flowers of corn poppies, waving above the stubble, are here because a plough brought dormant seeds to the surface last autumn, when light triggered their germination. Its next pass will bury another generation, to resurface who knows when; a perpetually churning soil seed bank, until herbicides become so effective that no seeds survive for annual reinvestment.

Some arable weeds, like the scarlet pimpernel in the field headland, would not survive for long in competition with grasses if this field was left to lie fallow. It's a reliable natural timekeeper, opening at sunrise, closing at 3pm – earlier today if those approaching dark rain clouds hide the sun. Some of its flowers have already set seed. When I pick a ripe seed capsule and squeeze the sphere gently, it splits around its equator, like a geographer's globe, and a shower of seeds trickles through my fingers.

Wherever soil is disturbed, wildflower opportunists find a roothold. A band of sky-blue field speedwell flowers fringes the path: speedwell indeed, a sight to lift the spirits, quicken the pulse. A native of the Caucasus, first recorded in the wild in Britain in 1826, it's now common along field edges, likely transported between fields and farms on muddy wheels of agricultural vehicles. Speedwell and pimpernel seeds will be embedded in the mud on my boots: arable weeds have followed in humanity's footsteps, every step of the way, since the earliest days of agriculture.

Phil Gates

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Jenrick's perverse fix for the care workforce crisis

Robert Jenrick has suggested that instead of granting visas to overseas workers to fill the gaping hole in our care system, British parents should be encouraged to have more children to provide the workforce to look after our growing population of elderly people (Report, 3 October). This has to be one of the most stupid things I've heard coming out of the mouth of a Tory minister.

For a start, with a world population of 8 billion and rising, that already pushes available resources to the limit, it's not a good plan to encourage a faster increase. And even if it were to happen, it's going to be at least 20 years before it makes a difference to the workforce, which is no good for those who are elderly now.

Second, many working families experiencing the cost of living crisis can't afford to properly feed, clothe and generally provide for the children they have already got, without even considering the extra childcare costs.

Instead, we could continue to use the resources we have – the people who want to come here and work in areas where we have thousands of vacancies, and who will pay taxes and boost local economies.

And if there is a problem with insufficient housing, maybe the levelling up that the Tories keep going on about (despite there being very little evidence of it happening here in the north-east) could include some investment in the hundreds of empty properties in our towns and villages, including converting empty office blocks.

Barbara Hastings
Murton, County Durham

● Robert Jenrick's contribution to baby-bust hysteria is straight out of the Viktor Orbán playbook. Ageing is a challenge we can meet with sensible, pragmatic measures, but combining demographic doom-mongering with anti-immigration sentiment turns a rational policy debate into a branch of the culture wars. For the pronatalists of eastern Europe, more babies is inextricably bound with a nativist agenda and a patriarchal worldview that asserts motherhood as a woman's highest aspiration and value. Have no doubt that some in this country have sympathies with that.

Meanwhile, Jenrick proposes we build more houses to encourage more babies, who will in turn need more houses. Where does he imagine this pyramid scheme ending?

The solution to demographic change isn't more people to get old and, in turn, demand more infrastructure, more food, more energy and create more emissions. It is embracing the value of fewer people in improving our quality of life and, critically, reducing our environmental impact, giving hope of a better future to young and old alike.

Alistair Currie
Population Matters

● Robert Jenrick reveals how low the moral standards of our growth-obsessed society have become. Children are nothing more than resources to care for us in our old age. They are expected to be able to work for us in this way, despite the escalating climate breakdown and ecosystems collapse that they have inherited because of our addiction to an ecocidal economic model.

Is having children to look after us in our old age really a moral reason for having children, especially when we are introducing them into an overspent environment? We are already exceeding the carrying capacity of the planet by 300%.

Barbara Williams
Long Hanborough, Oxfordshire

Tower blocks are often good places to live

Simon Jenkins (Stop building eyesore tower blocks please, 29 September) points out the potential defects of tower blocks, and favours a return to Victorian terrace housing as a better solution to high-density living. It is certainly possible to build good terraced estates, although in his example of Goldsmith Street in Norwich, planning regulations on minimum street width had to be suspended to fit in the required 100 dwellings.

Such dense terraces would have to be built across large swathes of land to provide an alternative to apartment blocks. If that happened, serious problems of access, service provision and adequate green space would soon arise.

Everyone's favourite bete noires, high-rise council towers, were seldom built in isolation. They were in mixed developments of high- and middle-rise apartments together with terraced housing. It is true that many of these estates have not stood the test of time, but the reasons are complex.

It is not true that all council tenants hate living in high-rise apartments. Many like living in them and appreciate the space, good internal layout and quality of surviving blocks. It is unfortunate that many of the architects who designed such housing are no longer appreciated.

Berthold Lubetkin's Spa Green estate in Islington, and Cranbrook estate in Bethnal Green, London, are still good places to live. Even Ernő Goldfinger's Trellick and Balfron towers are experiencing revival after years of abuse. There seems little wrong with living in well-designed, properly maintained tower blocks, as many people living in the Barbican estate in the City of London would attest.

Nicholas Russell
Author of Lubetkin and Goldfinger: The Rise and Fall of British High-Rise Council Housing

The real cost of local authority budget cuts

The fact that this government has inflicted 13 years of cuts to local government budgets did not feature in debates at the Conservative party conference this week, but the impact of these budget cuts has been to rip local services to shreds and to tear the heart out of many local communities.

Richard Partington (As town hall finances fail, need for reform has become urgent, 2 October) rightly points out that the crisis extends far beyond Birmingham and the handful of local authorities facing bankruptcy. My own local authority, once proud to be among the highest performing local government authorities in England, has had nearly 45% of its budget cut since 2012, and now flounders near the bottom of the pile.

Austerity is not merely a fiscal equation on a balance sheet, but something that causes pain and distress to millions of vulnerable people, and diminishes the quality of everyone's community life. The real cost of this central government butchery can be measured in the absence of social care for the elderly and the most vulnerable; the closure of children's centres, swimming pools and libraries; a deterioration in the maintenance of recreational spaces such as parks and playgrounds; and the loss of financial support for activities that support and strengthen local communities. This tattered inventory is the true indictment of this miserly and neglectful government, and should have been splattered all over the city of Manchester this week.

Peter Riddle
Wirksworth, Derbyshire

Corrections and clarifications

● **A letter was mistaken in referring to John Lewis as ever having a store at the Meadowhall shopping centre in Sheffield (Taking a lead to save the high street, 16 September, Journal, p7).**

● **A TV preview for Local Hero said the character Mac falls for "Jenny Seagrove's marine scientist". In fact, he falls for the hotel owner's wife, played by Jennifer Black (Film, 30 September, What's On, p8).**

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Scientific search for a dot of contrition

Perhaps the Nobel prize scientists who discovered the quantum dot could be set to work on detecting an equivalent dot of contrition in Rishi Sunak's Conservative party conference speech (PM aims to be fresh face of party in power since 2010, 5 October).

John Lowery
London

● It's odd that the prime minister proposes a ban on smoking "for the nation's health" while simultaneously encouraging road traffic congestion with its accompanying emissions and pollution.

John Weightman
Ettington, Warwickshire

● Why is it that no one has pointed out that raising the minimum wage to £11, as Jeremy Hunt pledges (Report, 2 October), is an increase of 5.6%? This is below the August CPI rate of 6.7% and the average rate of pay increase, which in July was running at 7.8%. Hardly the generous increase the chancellor is portraying.

Fred Pickering
Chapel-en-le-Frith, Derbyshire

● The correspondence about breast pockets (Letters, 30 September) reminds me that I often bemoan the lack of any pockets at all in many skirts and dresses. Keeping a handkerchief up a sleeve just doesn't work as it almost invariably falls out. Designers, please note!

Patricia Pipe
Saltash, Cornwall

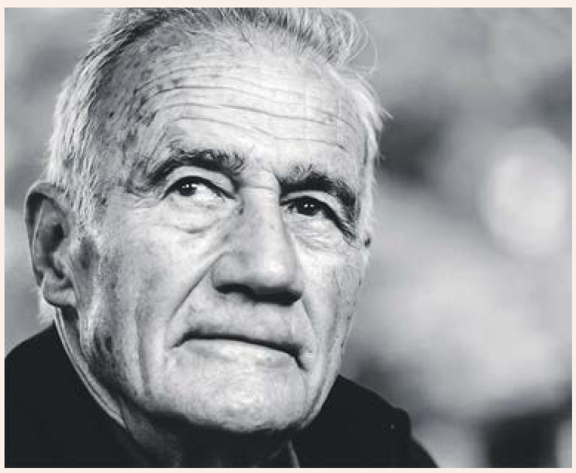
● What a crying shame they didn't begin work on HS2 at the northern end (Sunak scraps HS2 northern link with pledge to revive local transport plans Tories tore up, 5 October).

Helen Watson
Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire



John Turner

Architect whose work showed the benefits of people building their own shelter



Turner, above, and his photograph of the El Ermitaño settlement, Lima, Peru, in 1963
WOLFGANG SCHMIDT/RIGHT LIVELIHOOD; JOHN FC TURNER;

In the 1950s and 60s John Turner, who has died aged 96, addressed the housing challenges faced by members of rural communities in Peru when they migrated to urban areas in search of a better life. Official planning and design approaches were neither appropriate nor affordable to such people, and Turner was immensely impressed by their resourcefulness in creating their own housing developments and even complete neighbourhoods.

Turner's writings, as John FC Turner, presented Peru's urban squatter settlements – *barriadas* – to a global audience as not a problem but a resource.

Predominantly poor people moved on to land on the urban periphery, subdivided it into residential plots and places for community facilities, and built their own housing using whatever materials came to hand. Settlements were improved gradually as people became integrated into the urban economy, making urban development effectively self-financed.

Such achievements were widely regarded as "unplanned" or "informal" and therefore to be removed or prevented. However, Turner argued that it was an approach that worked for the people involved, and that professionals should learn from them. His views influenced architects, planners and other built-environment professionals globally and inspired a wide range of sites and services projects and in-situ upgrading programmes.

While studying architecture at the Architectural Association (AA) School of Architecture in London, he had himself been influenced by the ideas of Patrick Geddes, Lewis Mumford and the anarchist newspaper Freedom, edited by Colin Ward. He qualified in 1954, and three years later was invited to work for state housing agencies in Peru, where he was joined by his friend Patrick Crooke after an earthquake in 1958. They built the case for incremental development based on the fact that, given adequate access to land, basic resources and freedom to control key local development decisions, people and their local organisations can and often do build and maintain attractive places.

These principles formed the basis for seminal articles such as Squatter Housing: An Architecture That Works (1968) in the journal Architectural Design. He started by editing an issue in 1963 and continued until 1976, showing how

> **Turner presented Peru's urban squatter settlements – *barriadas* – to a global audience as not a problem but a resource**

squatter-barriada builders who choose to invest their life savings in an environment that they create transform themselves in the process. He saw housing as a verb, an action rather than a thing, with value in social not just economic terms. The process of production, from planning to design and construction, should reflect the needs, aspirations and resources of the people to be accommodated.

Together with his colleagues the US anthropologists Lisa Peattie and William Mangin, Turner produced compelling evidence that communities should be actively engaged from beginning to end if urban areas were to be socially inclusive. He expanded on this approach when in 1965 he moved to the Harvard-MIT Joint Center for Urban Studies in the US. In 1970, the government commissioned him to lead an evaluation of self-help housing in the US, material from which led to the publication of his book Freedom to Build: Dweller Control of the Housing Process (1972), co-edited with Robert Fichter.

Turner returned to the UK in 1973 as a lecturer at the AA and then at the Development Planning Unit, University College London. He directed short courses for senior professionals from countries that were being urbanised. On one occasion he ended his introductory lecture on participatory housing and announced that there would be a 15-minute break. The course participants sat still, indicating that they expected the door to

open and a trolley to arrive with refreshments, at which point he asked: "Who is going to buy the tea and coffee and who will help with the washing up?" It was a key moment, and within days the course members were bantering in the kitchen as a group of friends.

Rather than seeing issues through the conventional political lens of left-right, Turner viewed the concept of power from the perspective of "top-down" or "bottom-up", and strongly advocated the latter. He distilled his views in his book Housing By People (1976), which coincided with the first global Habitat conference in Vancouver, where he was a keynote speaker.

He was appreciated by international aid agencies such as the World Bank and UN for providing frank, incisive comments about the need to understand how local processes worked. In 1988 he was given the Right Livelihood award for "championing the rights of people to build, manage and sustain their own shelter and communities".

Born in Kensington, central London, and brought up in Kent, John was the son of Jocelyne (nee Gaskin), daughter of the artist Arthur Gaskin, and Austin Charlewood Turner, an architect. His twin brothers, Richard and Arthur, died in their 20s; his sister, Mary Ann, became a botanical illustrator. After attending St Edmund's school, Hindhead, Surrey, and Wellington college, Berkshire, he enrolled at the AA.

His first marriage, to Catherine Wilson in 1950, ended in divorce. David, their one child to survive into adulthood, died in 2019. In 1971, he married Beth (Bertha) Berry, and together they produced Building Community: A Third World Case Book (1988).

Turner's documentary A Roof of My Own (UNTV, 1964) was incorporated into a video for which he wrote the script, made in 2016 by the architect and urbanist Kathrin Golda-Pongratz of the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Barcelona. It was shown to the community that he had studied on the outskirts of Lima.

Many current residents recognised themselves helping their parents build their homes and provided personal testimony for Golda-Pongratz's film City Unfinished - Voices of El Ermitaño (2018). She arranged to house Turner's extensive archive in the Historical Archive of the College of Architects of Catalonia (COAC).

He is survived by Beth, his stepchildren, Heidi, Jayne and Christopher, grandchildren, Vanessa, Amarun, Paccha and Tomi, and his sister.

Geoffrey Payne

John Francis Charlewood Turner, architect, author and campaigner, born 9 July 1927; died 3 September 2023

Michael Steed

Liberal party activist and psephologist who provided statistics for general election guides

Michael Steed, who has died aged 83, was one of the pioneers of psephology who worked with the political scientist and psephologist David Butler on many general election studies. He took an early interest in the significance of local elections, and for more than two decades provided an annual chart of those results to the Economist magazine, as well as contributing to the Observer and making television appearances on election nights.

A prominent Liberal party activist, he was the vice-chair of the National League of Young Liberals during its radical phase in the 1960s, frequently at odds with the party leader at the time, Jeremy Thorpe. He consistently championed gay rights, called for a federal Europe and proposed constitutional reform. Steed did not just snipe from the wings but took on key roles in the party, becoming a member of the executive and serving as its president (1978-79) under an election system he devised.

Born in Ramsgate, Kent, to Margaret (nee Cloke) and Norman Steed, a farmer, Michael was the eldest of two boys and four girls.

He attended St Lawrence college, a local independent school. In 1959, he spent six months in Europe, which instilled a passion for internationalism. At Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, he studied economics in his first year, and then switched to geography.

He had joined the Liberal party in 1958, but it was at Cambridge that he bec ame active in national Liberal politics. Involved in the anti-apartheid movement, he attempted to enter South Africa to deliver aid to the victims of the Sharpeville shootings, but was refused entry by the regime.

From 1963 to 1965 Steed undertook postgraduate research with Butler at Nuffield College, Oxford. He became Butler's assistant, from 1964 to 2005 contributing, latterly with John Curtice, the statistical section to many of the long series of definitive books on each general election.

A further aspect of his work with Butler lay in devising what he believed to be a more sophisticated formula for measuring electoral swing. Butler took the votes for all the parties whereas Steed believed that extracting only the Labour and Conservative votes provided a more accurate measurement.

In 1966 Steed also began lecturing in government at Manchester University, a post that he held until his retirement due to ill health in 1987.



Steed argued for a focus on principles and policies rather than personalities

As vice-chair of the Young Liberals, Steed demonstrated his skill at constructing a powerful case in debate, particularly in response to the attempts by Thorpe and other party bigwigs to discipline its youth movement. Steed maintained that "the party must shift attention away from personalities to a wide-ranging debate about ideology, principles and policies". He was a popular participant in the end-of-conference Glee Club.

I benefited from his advocacy and forensic skills when he persuaded the Boundary Commission, via an inquiry in Leeds, that legally it did not have to create constituencies only within the city council area. As a consequence its changed proposals produced the winnable Leeds West seat for me in 1983.

Steed also fought difficult elections. In 1967 he contested the Brierley Hill, West Midlands, byelection and lost his deposit. At the 1970 general election he contested the more promising constituency of Truro, but finished third. In 1973 he was the candidate in the Manchester Exchange byelection; he polled 36.5% and came a good second, the Liberals building a community politics campaign from scratch, concentrating on soliciting and dealing with electors' individual problems.

Steed unsuccessfully fought Manchester Central in the February 1974 general election and Burnley in 1983. He also fought Greater Manchester North at the 1979 European parliament election. His one election success came in a 2008 byelection for Canterbury city council, now as a Liberal Democrat, but he chose not to defend his seat in 2011. His difficulty as a candidate was not uncommon among academics fighting elections in that his warm personality was at times hidden behind his intellectualism.

Towards the end of 1987 Steed contracted a serious neurological disease that proved resistant to diagnose precisely and was thus difficult to treat. In 1970 he had married a Swedish Young Liberal, Margareta Holmstedt, and settled in Todmorden, West Yorkshire, but after they separated in 1990 he found it difficult to cope with the hilly terrain there and returned to Kent, settling in Canterbury. In 1999 he met Barry Clements, a master carpenter, at a men's social meeting in Whitstable. They became partners, and were joined in a civil partnership earlier this year.

Steed and Margareta divorced in 2004. Barry survives him, as do his sisters, Corinne, Sarah, Sue and Frances, and his brother, David.

Michael Meadowcroft

Michael Steed, psephologist, lecturer and Liberal activist, born 25 January 1940; died 30 August 2023

Birthdays

Gerry Adams, former president, Sinn Féin, 75; **Lord (Melvyn) Bragg**, writer and broadcaster, 84; **Bill Buford**, author and former editor, Granta, 69; **Richard Caborn**, former Labour MP and minister, 80; **Prof Mario Capecchi**, molecular geneticist, 86; **Dame Bobbie Cheema-Grubb**, KC, high court judge, 57; **Maj-Gen Patrick Cordingley**, Gulf war commander, 79; **Eileen Derbyshire**, actor, 92; **Britt Ekland**, actor, 81; **Mark Field**, former Conservative MP and minister, 59; **Adam Gemili**, sprinter, 30; **Ioan Gruffudd**, actor, 50; **Ricky Hatton**, boxer, 45; **Penny Junor**, journalist, writer and broadcaster, 74; **Prof Catriona Kelly**, senior research fellow, Trinity College, Cambridge, 64; **Emily Mortimer**, actor, 52; **Niall Quinn**, footballer, 57; **Elisabeth Shue**, actor, 60; **Ben Summerskill**, charity executive, 62.

Letter
Pat Arrowsmith

The first piece of correspondence I received as a local councillor in Haringey in 1978 was from Pat Arrowsmith (obituary, 3 October). She wanted to know what I was doing as her elected representative to protect her from nuclear war.

Regular correspondence followed and some 20 years later she contacted me when the housing department was threatening to take her to court following complaints from her neighbours about her feeding flocks of pigeons out of her window. I had to explain to the housing officers that not only was she quite prepared to go to prison over the issue, but she might even relish it. Eventually they decided it would be easier to drop the matter.

Toby Harris

Announcements

Acknowledgments

MARSHALL, John. Heartfelt thanks from Maxi Marshall for all the wonderful messages, tributes and outpouring of love and support on the recent death of her adored husband John Marshall.

Deaths

WILLIS (née ELSTONE), Dilys, theatrical costumier and designer, died 19 September 2023. Much loved mother of Sarah, Megan, Grania and Kate; grandmother of Harriet, Eleanor, Emily, Amelia, Tabitha and Eloise; and great-grandmother of Peggy and Hazel. Funeral at Putney Vale on 16 October. Poppy's Funerals, London SW17.

In Memoriam

SUTCLIFFE, Jock. Musician playing gig elsewhere. Modest magical player - outstanding oboist, cellist and teacher. 6 October 1918 to 5 July 2001. Much missed.

For Announcements, Acknowledgments, Adoptions, Anniversaries, Birthdays, Births, Deaths, Engagements, Memorial Services and In Memoriam, email us at announcements@theguardian.com including your name, address and telephone number or phone 0203 353 2114.

Puzzles

Yesterday's solutions

Killer sudoku
Easy

6	8	9	2	7	3	1	5	4
2	1	4	9	5	8	3	7	6
3	5	7	6	1	4	2	8	9
4	2	3	5	8	7	6	9	1
1	9	5	3	2	6	8	4	7
7	6	8	1	4	9	5	3	2
8	7	6	4	3	2	9	1	5
9	3	1	7	6	5	4	2	8
5	4	2	8	9	1	7	6	3

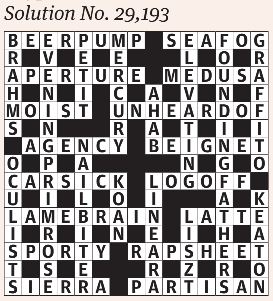
Medium

5	8	6	9	2	7	1	3	4
3	9	4	1	8	5	2	7	6
1	2	7	6	3	4	9	8	5
6	7	8	2	1	9	4	5	3
4	5	2	3	7	6	8	1	9
9	1	3	4	5	8	6	2	7
7	3	9	8	4	2	5	6	1
8	4	1	5	6	3	7	9	2
2	6	5	7	9	1	3	4	8

Codeword



Cryptic crossword
Solution No. 29,193

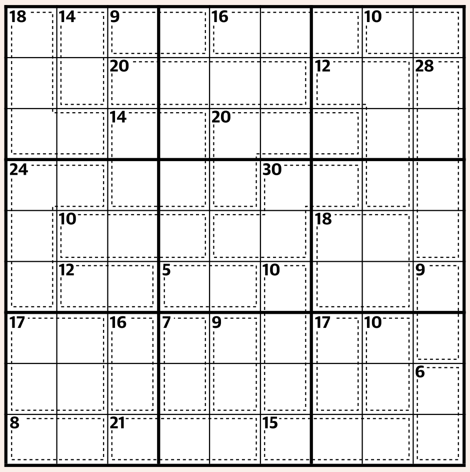


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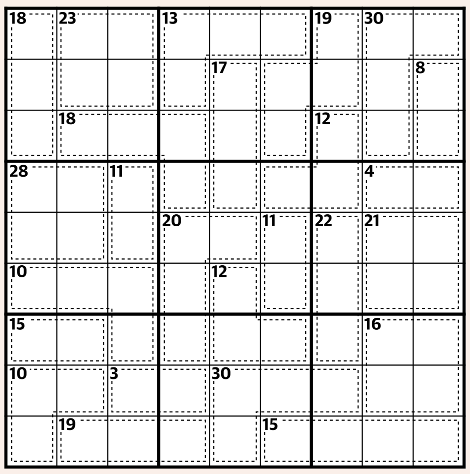
Killer sudoku

Easy

The normal rules of sudoku apply: fill each row, column and 3x3 box with all the numbers from 1 to 9. In addition, the digits in each inner shape (marked by dots) must add up to the number in the top corner of that box. No digit can be repeated within an inner shape.

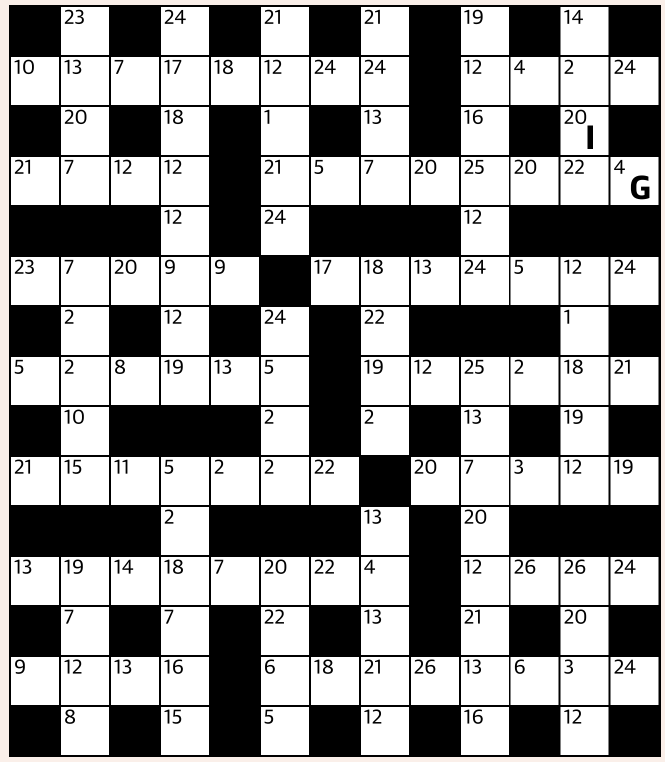


Medium



Codeword

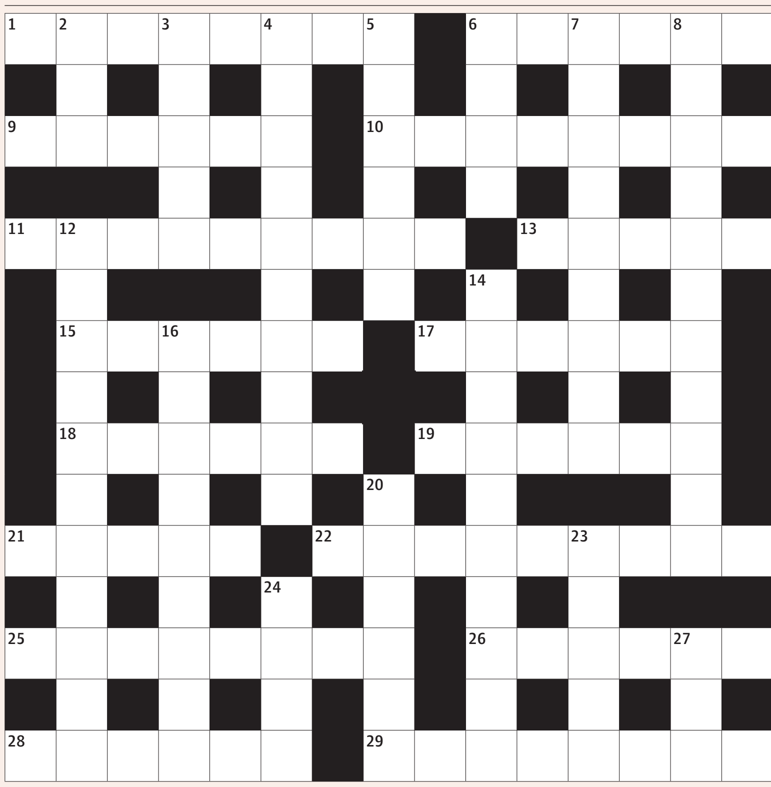
Each letter of the alphabet makes at least one appearance in the grid, and is represented by the same number wherever it appears. The letters decoded should help you to identify other letters and words in the grid.



A B C D E F ~~G~~ H ~~I~~ J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4 G	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20 I	21	22	23	24	25	26

Guardian cryptic crossword No 29,194 set by Tramp



Across

1 Steadies one in front of Britney Spears (8)
6 Tory and scoundrel agree (6)
9 Get to go on live act (6)
10 Large female wearing short coat, one exposed seam that's cut (8)
11 Meeting with former pupil first thing (9)
13 Writing solution at side of book by right margin (5)
15 Congress controlled by this? Offer to cut fossil fuel withdrawn (6)
17 Turn on old lover with call (6)
18 Lies from Tories – fellows ousting European (6)
19 Good record label backing trendy star group (6)
21 Complains: parking clamps ultimately put on wheels (5)
22 Justification to restrict beer (9)
25 More obscene husband and I parting through strain (8)
26 One might make a bust by exposing underwear (6)
28 Adult right to feed metres from magic mushroom? (6)
29 Recovered from vaccination? Went too far (8)

Down

2 First-class Australian century against English (3)
3 On both sides of gate, notice a gnome (5)
4 Fed up? I'm smiling on camera to get lift (7,3)
5 Area with dry rot rising (6)
6 Dressed as college boy (4)
7 Enter it if up the spout? Is she now a mummy? (9)
8 Uncomfortable one unlacing bustles (11)
12 One reduces friction in party with relation (4,7)
14 Go through old coins biting Queen on one (10)
16 Show Dirty Harry is half-hearted (4,5)
20 Cut musical act (6)
23 Drinks from top of bottles (5)
24 Food not hot on cold plate (4)
27 I work out after tablet (3)

The Guardian



Sly

"I never lived a life I didn't want to live

The soul superstar on ageing, addiction and his unlikely autobiography

Stone

G2

Friday 06/10/23

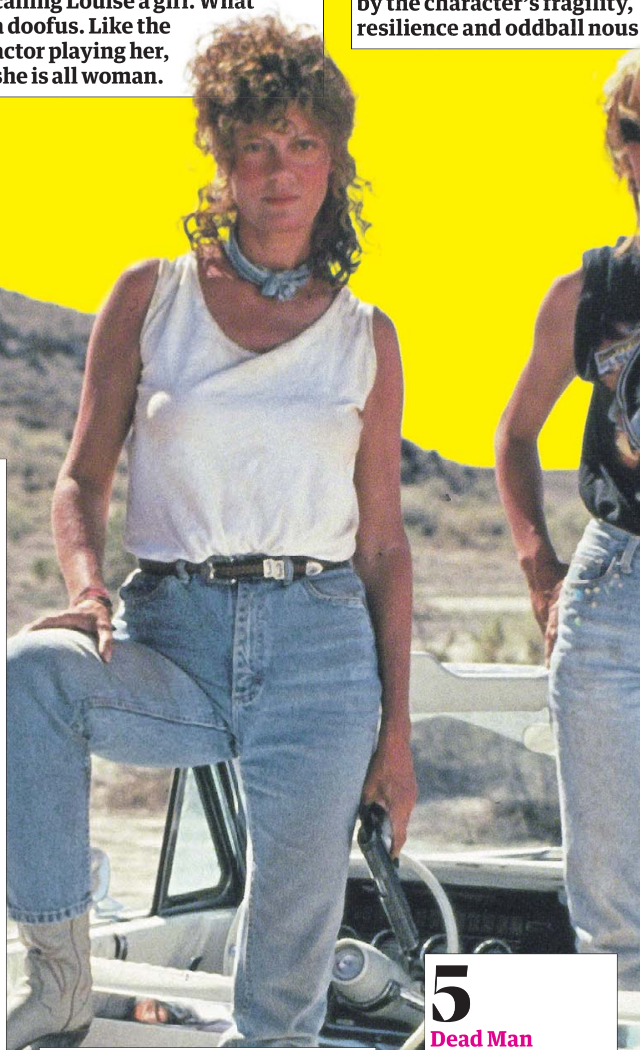
Film & Music

Susan Sarandon
From Rocky to Thelma – ranked!
page 2



Ranked! Susan Sarandon films

As the feisty, formidable actor turns 77, we celebrate her best roles. By Charlotte O'Sullivan



1
Thelma & Louise *(1991)*
Ridley Scott's feminist classic is one of the most wrenching, hilarious love stories ever told. Sarandon and Geena Davis are the titular best friends who find themselves on the lam near the Grand Canyon with nowhere to go but down. It was Sarandon's idea (which she kept secret from Scott) for Louise to kiss Thelma before the pair take the plunge. Aged 44, she was a battle-hardened veteran. Harvey Keitel's concerned cop keeps calling Louise a girl. What a doofus. Like the actor playing her, she is all woman.

2
Atlantic City *(1980)*
The second film Sarandon made with Louis Malle (don't be tempted to watch the first, the icky Pretty Baby) sees Sarandon's wannabe blackjack dealer, Sally, perved over by Burt Lancaster's hoodlum, Lou, and embroiled in an attempt to scam the mob. Every time Sally opens her mouth you're thrown by the character's fragility, resilience and oddball nous.



3
The Hunger *(1983)*
Sarandon and co-star David Bowie had an affair while making Tony Scott's cult vampire romance, but it's the sexual tension between her and Catherine Deneuve that makes this so more-ish. Sarandon's well-heeled Sarah can't resist Deneuve's posh parasite Miriam, and, despite the ropey plot, the pair get under your skin.

4
Bull Durham *(1988)*
If you're allergic to Kevin Costner, you may take a turn for the worse during Ron Shelton's baseball comedy. But Sarandon is sensational as Annie, a flaky, libidinous, bookish sports fan torn between two minor-league athletes (Tim Robbins' gormless Nuke and Costner's savvy Crash). Some critics feel the ending tames Annie, but Shelton has said he always envisaged the character moving on from Crash and becoming a professor at the Sorbonne. Yep, that glove fits.



5
Dead Man Walking *(1995)*
This won Sarandon a best actress Oscar. Not all directors would have cast the 49-year-old as nun and real-life death row activist Sister Helen Prejean. Fortunately, Tim Robbins (Sarandon's partner at the time) was a lateral thinker. Though routinely asked to play sexpots, Sarandon is wholly plausible.

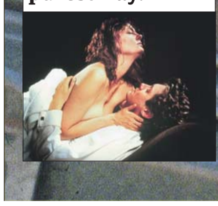
6
The Rocky Horror Picture Show *(1975)*
Sarandon (still pretty unknown) underplays things nicely here as the virginal Janet, induced to take a walk on the wild side by a gang of bloodsucking misfits. First Janet is seduced by Tim Curry's Frank-N-Furter, then she gets physical with pretty, one-dimensional stud, Rocky, singing "Touch-a, Touch-a, Touch-a, Touch me". It would be a stretch to say that Sarandon has even a halfway decent voice, but her pluck is adorable.





7
The Witches of Eastwick *(1987)*
Sarandon once said that female actors over 40 get stuck playing "witches or bitches". Still, she makes the most of both. In George Miller's uneven, SFX-heavy adaptation of the John Updike novel, Sarandon captures the agony and ecstasy of being a sex-starved, highly strung supernatural singleton with a light touch.

8
White Palace *(1990)*
An underrated romcom starring Sarandon as Nora, a waitress in a May-December relationship with widowed Jewish yuppie, Max (James Spader). Nora is a real slob. Or maybe Max is just anally retentive? Whatever, the scene in which he presents her with a Dustbuster brings out the best in both. White Palace explores ethnicity, class and religion, and its sex scenes are dirty in the purest way.



9
Lorenzo's Oil *(1992)*
Sarandon always looks scrumptiously exhausted and here the bags under her eyes are particularly magnetic. Sarandon is Michaela, the mother of a child with a rare genetic condition. What a shiver she provokes when Michaela throws a startled look at the doctor – clocking, for the first time, that he's not a god.



10
The Client *(1994)*
What a team Sarandon and Brad Renfro make in this crime thriller. Mark (Renfro) is wanted by the mob and the FBI and initially turns his nose up at Sarandon's lawyer Reggie. She's totally convincing as an ex-alcoholic who has lost custody of her kids. There is no obvious happy ending for Reggie, allowing Sarandon to churn us up when they have to part.

See full list of 20 at theguardian.com/film

Playlist



1 **Samantha Morton**
Hunger Hill Road
The lauded actor turns her hand to eerie dub: made with XL's Richard Russell, Morton's debut is skulking and spooked, spiked with remarks on a "Ghostbusters sky / The smell of piss".

2 **Tems**
Me & U
"You are my everything / Only me and you", sings Tems on her solo return. Her words are as much plea as promise, limned by intent, nervy bass and lapping guitar.

3 **Tara Clerkin Trio**
Marble Walls
A lovely, limpid meditation from the Bristol ensemble: loose guitar; dreamy, openhearted vocals; and a casually complex, shuffling drumbeat.

4 **Sleater-Kinney**
Hell
From a new album informed by the deaths of Carrie Brownstein's parents, Hell – led by Corin Tucker – hurtles into the abyss via pummelling drums, brawny guitar and surging drama.

5 **Gazelle Twin**
Fear Keeps Us Alive
Paring back the overt aggression of her last record, Elizabeth Bernholz needles her way into your bones with this dripping, minimalist encroach, her distorted vocals darting between victim and aggressor.

6 **Gruff Rhys**
Celestial Candyfloss
A deliciously decadent return: silvery strings and rollicking piano revel in a tale of mondegreens and misunderstandings, romantics on the run and volcanoes that drip marmalade.

7 **Myriam Gendron**
Bric-à-Brac
From a new expanded version of the Montreal folkie's Not So Deep As a Well, which set Dorothy Parker poems to music, Bric-ào-Brac centres on beatific autoharp and stoic yet enchanted vocals.

PHOTOGRAPHS: METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER/SPORTSPHOTO/ALLSTAR; PÅL HANSEN/THE GUARDIAN
COVER PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

The reader interview

‘These days, I talk to the trees to get answers’

The folk singer **Joan Baez** on competing with Joni Mitchell, spirituality and impersonating Bob Dylan



PHOTOGRAPH: JAMES CROUCHER/NEWSPIX

I’ve met you lots of times backstage after concerts and have always been struck by how warm, friendly and open you are with your fans. Do you have any standout memories of meeting fans – either beautiful and moving or funny and bizarre? *KevinFillis*
I’m sure I do. You’ll need to give me a bit to think about it over a 60-year period … I remember the British audiences seemed so restrained. One night in Leeds, I said something awful like: “Is everybody out there alive?” They just couldn’t express themselves. So I didn’t know where to go next, except to be rude, I guess.

Has confidence ever been a problem for you in your career? *ToTheIsland*
The confidence in my own voice has never flagged. I can say that because it’s not of my inventing: it’s of my maintenance and delivery. When I went through periods where the career was really off the rails, I lost confidence and felt confused, I think like anybody.

My junior high yearbook said: “Joanie Baez, she’s going to be a cartoonist.” I did caricatures of Jimmy Dean and the opera types that my mom liked, and of my friends, and sold them for $5. So I had other avenues, but I don’t think I ever thought: “I better start doing cartoons or selling bathing suits.” The singing was assumed.

If you could speak to your younger self, what would you tell her? *AbbyDormer*
Take it easy. Relax a little.

What do you think was the biggest success and failure of the hippy generation? *Kieran123*
I was thinking the other day about Burning Man. We all make fun of it. Not all, but the outsiders. It’s a community. It can’t be knocked for that. In some ways, the hippy movement created a community for a lot of lost souls. I think our failures were outstripped by the good stuff. Nobody back then could have possibly written the scenario we’re going through today.

Burning Man is unlike anything I’ve ever seen. I went maybe 10, 12 years ago. You have the uptight stuff. It’s boiling and you have to bring your own water, so you think: “That’s not going to work for me.” Everybody is running after the water truck. I covered my head so nobody could see who it was and ran around with no clothes on, which worked well for me. Glastonbury [Baez played in 2008] was equally wonderful. It’s the same feeling, especially if it’s muddy. Everybody has to be kind to the tent next to them. Even at Woodstock, I had three meals a day and a comfortable place to stay.

Do you believe in God?
Arsnotoria
I think so. I tend more towards Buddhist and Native American thought. For me, the spirits are quite real. I talk to trees. I haven’t had a therapist now in 20 years. I talk to the trees to get answers.

If you’re still and open, this one tree will tell me what I don’t want to hear. You can ask the right person, they’ll tell you what you want to hear. But trees give it to you cold turkey. My life is out with the trees and the creek at the bottom of my hill. I spend hours there being with nature. If I can’t get a grip, I’ll ask direct questions like: “I want to understand what’s happening, can you help me?” And other times I say: “I don’t care what’s happening, just make me feel better.”

> “I covered my head so no one could see who I was and ran around with no clothes on. It worked for me

Is it true your Dylan impersonation in the 60s could fool people over the phone? *PeteTheBeat*
Yes. It was his early voice. I don’t do the older voice.

What are your views on today’s politics? *GlenStrc*
How long have you got? It could just be: we’re fucked. That’s pretty succinct. I don’t know how the Brits will react to that, but it’s so awful. All the bullying and hatred has been spreading like wildfire, and we [the US] are the main source here. That, plus global warming, doesn’t look very hopeful. I’ve called myself a pessimist all my life, but recently somebody said they thought pessimism was a waste of time and hope was a practice that doesn’t just happen naturally. If I want to be hopeful, I have to find ways and reasons to be hopeful.

How did your new documentary come about? *Rasbperrypi*
Two friends of mine are both directors. When I was talking about doing a final tour, we decided we would start filming, not knowing whether it would be the last tour. I gave them a key to my storage unit. I thought there would be old lampshades and stuff, but it was a trove. My mother kept every letter I ever wrote, every letter my sisters wrote. My father filmed us with a Super 8 camera since I was three. I had no idea she had kept all this. It was the directors’ good fortune, but also their curse because it was just too much. But they did an amazing job. I wanted to make an honest legacy. It includes childhood trauma, tapes from sessions with therapists where I was doing a deep dive into how my growing-up process had been altered until I was around 50. I’ve certainly changed physically. I wish I still had eyelashes like that!

Of the competitive nature of women in music in the 60s and 70s, Joni Mitchell once suggested: “Joan Baez would have broken my leg if she could.” Did you feel this combative tension at the time?
McScootikins
I’m delighted that Joni Mitchell is back on stage. I wasn’t close with her. She wasn’t somebody I spent a lot of time with. Did I see her as competition? You know, it’s worse than that. I never thought I had *any* competition. I knew I wanted to be top of the heap no matter what. I knew nobody else had a voice like mine. But I didn’t write songs. I didn’t do the stuff Joni was doing early on. I’ve been able to call her a couple of times to tell her how much I appreciate her paintings. I was looking on an aeroplane at an in-flight magazine. I thought it was an impressionist I’d missed. There were four or five paintings and they were Joni’s. I went home and called her. I said they made me cry.

That smile! It is sheer happiness. How come you look so good Joan? You are as beautiful today as you were in the 60s. As a creaky 72-year-old woman, I am not looking in the mirror again today!
LucyLockett
Ha! That’s not fair. Look in the mirror and deal with it! I made a decision not to go with all the facelifting. It was not an easy decision because everybody does it. I get these lines here and here … It’ll just bite you in the ass at some point. This ageing stuff is not for the faint-hearted, for sure.
As told to Rich Pelley
Joan Baez I Am a Noise is in US cinemas from 6 October.

Send us your questions for next week’s interviewee
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WED	29	**BRISTOL** O2 ACADEMY

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'Let's be frank – Rock was a horndog!'

Rock Hudson's death in 1985 changed public perception of Aids. Yet in life, finds **Ryan Gilbey**, the golden age actor was anything but an activist

Gore Vidal's reaction to the news of Truman Capote's death in 1984 is well known. "Good career move," the writer said. Rock Hudson, once the most bankable star in Hollywood, died the following year – like Capote, he was 59 – but the manner of his death and the revelations that preceded it have deterred anyone from applying Vidal's line to him. Looked at coldly from a 21st-century vantage point, though, Hudson's death was a good career move, deepening his persona in ways that would never otherwise have happened. The actor died of complications from Aids, having been outed as gay months beforehand. His sexuality had been an open secret within the industry for decades. The public, however, remained oblivious until 1985. "It's odd to put it like this," says his biographer, Mark Griffin, "but Aids gave Rock a whole new dimension."

The suspicion has arisen that Hudson was trying to tell us something when he appeared in the 1955 Douglas Sirk melodrama All That Heaven Allows, which warns of the social dangers of nonconformity; or opposite Doris Day in the 1959 romcom Pillow Talk, where the actor plays a straight man posing as gay. Even his character's pseudonym – Rex Stetson – sounds a bit like Rock Hudson, which was itself a screen name. (He was born Roy Scherer Jr in Winnetka, Illinois, and was later known as Roy Fitzgerald.)

The star's double life has now inspired Rock Hudson: All That Heaven Allowed, a documentary by Stephen Kijak that uses cannily chosen clips from a career spanning more than 35 years alongside new interviews with friends and ex-lovers, including Tales of the City writer Armistead Maupin. We find Hudson himself admitting that as a child he didn't dare mention his acting dreams for fear they would be dismissed as "sissy stuff". And, when rumours about him surfaced in the form of insinuating magazine articles demanding to know why he hadn't found a wife yet, his wily agent Henry Willson made sure that none of them stuck, even if it meant leaking tittle-tattle about other clients instead.


Hudson – 'the consummate movie star' – on the beach with a friend in 1963

The actor became known as "the face of Aids". His death boosted awareness of the disease and kickstarted fundraising efforts. But it also brought home the reality of gayness to audiences. If a macho figurehead such as Hudson could be gay – having wooed Day, Jane Wyman and Elizabeth Taylor on screen – then so could anyone.

Before his Aids diagnosis, he had been so many other things: A-list hunk, suave romcom star and all-round Mr America. "He was the consummate movie star and matinee idol," says Griffin. "A devastatingly handsome 6ft 4in Adonis with a gleam in his eye, a winning quality about him and that indefinable something that makes a star."

The actor and film historian Illeana Douglas first became aware of Hudson in the comedies he made with Day. "They seemed like the way life should be: everybody's wearing fantastic clothing, everything working out in the end. The secret of his appeal was that he seemed to understand women better than their own husbands. He was good-looking, masculine, funny, charismatic and he could dance the cha-cha-cha. And he's never a brute. He's flirting with women but he's not pawing them."

Universal Studios initially seemed unsure how to use Hudson, but he responded well to attentive film-makers such as Raoul Walsh, Anthony Mann and Douglas Sirk, the last of whom directed him in eight pictures (or nine if you count Never Say Goodbye, which Sirk worked on but wasn't credited for). These included the masterpieces All That Heaven Allows and Written on the Wind. Douglas thinks Hudson's partnership with Sirk is underrated. "We always talk about these actor-director collaborations like De Niro and Scorsese, yet we never think of Douglas Sirk and Rock Hudson like that," she says. "Sirk moulded him into this iconic 1950s figure, this symbol of masculinity. I suspect what he saw was a sensitive quality, which is very different to James Dean's sensitivity, because it's also got this macho element."


Hudson with his romcom co-star and close friend Doris Day circa 1960

> **If he'd had the choice he'd most likely have stayed in the closet**

Hudson received only one Oscar nomination, for George Stevens's 1956 oil epic Giant, co-starring Dean and Taylor. But, "he's a much better actor than people realise," says Douglas. "Some of those Sirk films, with their heightened dialogue, are very hard to carry off. But Hudson is so grounded; he has this ability to be very still so you can see what's going on in his face."

Pain plays a necessary part in Kijak's documentary: Hudson's biological father walked out on the family, and the boy was then abused by his stepfather. But Kijak was determined to avoid furtiveness and shame when it came to addressing the star's sex life. "This was the McCarthy era, the 'lavender scare'. But Rock was protected. He was a huge money-maker for the studio. He's white, he's wealthy, he's famous. We tend to talk about gay lives in terms of oppression, but this wasn't one of those cases."

Hudson is described in the film's opening minutes as "a sexual gladiator". Maintaining a public persona and even a sham marriage (to his agent's secretary, Phyllis Gates) clearly did nothing to impede a prolific sex life. "I wanted to explore the sexiness and fun of that world and show that some gay lives thrived and flourished," says Kijak. "Let's be frank about it: he was a horndog!"

One of the movie's problems may be that no one has a bad word to say about him. Hudson's Republican loyalties are mentioned, but there is nothing about how he joined the celebrity pile-on against Marlon Brando, who refused his 1973 Oscar for The Godfather as a protest against Hollywood's treatment of Native American people. "Actors can get on a soapbox," Hudson said at the time, "but I think it's often most eloquent to be silent." Of course he did: he had skin in the game when it came to keeping mum.

The closest he got to rebellious tendencies was when he chafed against his star persona, first in John Frankenheimer's 1966 identity-crisis thriller Seconds, and then as a lecherous high-school sports coach in Roger Vadim's vulgar 1971 Pretty Maids All in a Row (one of Quentin Tarantino's all-time favourite films). But it was as a cosy TV perennial in McMillan & Wife, and as a guest star on Dynasty, however, that Hudson saw out his final decade. "That's always the battle with actors," says Douglas. "Do they stay safe and cash the pay cheque or take risks with artsy films?"

For all that Hudson's death helped the fight against Aids, the question of whether his outing really changed anything in Hollywood remains moot. "I've been assured that there are leading men carrying today's major blockbusters who are in Rock Hudson's position," says Griffin. "They are gay and closeted but, as far as we've come post-Stonewall, they are not going to come out because it would adversely affect their careers."

"When this project was first suggested to me," Kijak recalls, "it was called Rock Hudson: Accidental Activist. And I didn't want the word 'activist' attached to him in that way." Because it would be an insult to actual activists? "Exactly. You really can't pin it on him. Everyone knows he was a gay man who had Aids, and the effect of that was incredibly positive. But did he have anything to do with it? I don't think so. Was he in control of that narrative? Most likely not. If he'd had the choice, he would have stayed in the closet."

More accurate, perhaps, to call him an inadvertent inspiration, blazing a trail against his own better judgment.

Rock Hudson: All That Heaven Allowed will be available to rent and own on digital platforms from 23 October.

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF MARTIN FLAHERTY AND THE ROCK HUDSON ESTATE COLLECTION/HBO; GETTY IMAGES



Sly Stone performing in 1971



‘I can’t make music now. But I can hear it in my mind’

A decade ago, **Alexis Petridis** last interviewed legendary musician Sly Stone. It didn’t go well. Now 80, the singer is happier to look back on a wild and pioneering career

In 2019, Sly Stone’s doctors presented him with a stark ultimatum. An addiction to crack that stretched back decades had ravaged his body, potentially to the point of no return. “They told me that if I kept smoking, I would ruin my lungs or I might die,” he says today.

In fairness, this couldn’t have come as news. It was, he says, the fourth time in recent years he had been taken to hospital in an ambulance, suffering from breathing difficulties: the most recent had occurred a mere two weeks prior to his meeting with the doctors. On each previous occasion, a doctor had presented him with the same ultimatum, which Stone had declined to believe, discharging himself from the hospital against their orders, going home and calling one of his many dealers, even if it took him an hour to struggle from his room to the hospital car park. After all, he was the legendary Sly Stone, and at least part of his legend rested on his disinclination to do anything he didn’t want to do.

At the height of his success, in the years immediately after he more or less single-handedly changed the face of soul – the release of 1967’s Dance to the Music ushered in the psychedelic soul era, causing a raft of major Black artists to alter their approach in his wake and even had the mighty Motown scrambling to keep up with his innovations – he was almost as famous, or infamous, for his my-way-or-the-highway approach as he was for his music. He would cancel gigs at the last moment if he didn’t think the equipment was up to standard or felt the vibe wasn’t right. He delivered his label not the album they had anticipated and had begun to advertise – called The Incredible and Unpredictable Sly and the Family Stone – but 1971’s bleak, murky, experimental There’s a Riot Goin’ On.

Some people thought his behaviour was admirable, a Black artist demanding agency in an industry built on denying Black artists’ agency. Some people just thought he was unbearably arrogant. “I am who I am when I am it,” he shrugged at one reporter.

“I never lived a life I didn’t want to live,” he tells me today. But on his fourth hospital visit, something clearly changed. “I just decided,” he says. “From the way I was feeling, I took it serious this time. Once I decided, it just happened.”

It wasn’t quite as simple as that: his daughter Sylvette Phunne and Arlene Hirschkowitz, the latter


Sly and the Family Stone in 1968


Stone with Bobby Womack in 1984

a former girlfriend from his lost years who more recently became his manager, seem to have spent a considerable portion of 2019 camped out on Stone's front lawn, shooing away dealers, threatening to call the police if they didn't leave. Now 80, Stone himself is clearly very ill. "I have trouble with my lungs, trouble with my voice, trouble with my hearing and trouble with the rest of my body, too," he says, but it is the issues with his breathing that sound the worst: he has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and has lost a large amount of his lung capacity. Certainly, he is too ill to talk in person; our interview is conducted via email.

But nevertheless, things seem very different. He has completed an autobiography named after one of his biggest hits, Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin), something I would once have told you was no more likely than Sly Stone being appointed US secretary of the treasury.

I have "previous" with Stone - I interviewed him in 2013, around the release of Higher!, a lavish retrospective box set, and it remains the weirdest experience of my journalistic career. Negotiations to bring him to the phone went on for weeks. I called repeatedly at the appointed time, to be met by an answering machine: "You called. Or did you? We'll call back," it said, with no option to leave a message. Eventually, he picked up the phone and literally told me to fuck off - he wouldn't do an interview unless he was paid in advance. After further negotiations, I tried again the following day. He spoke for 20 minutes, told me he wanted to form a new band made up of musicians with albinism that would "neutralise all the different racial problems", then excused himself to go to the toilet: "You asked me about regrets - if I don't take a big shit now, I'll regret that." Shortly afterwards, his archivist called me. Stone wanted to know if I knew the British royal family, as he had a plan to earn money teaching music to their children.

This time around, the experience of interviewing Stone couldn't be more different. No one asks for cash. His thoughtful answers arrive promptly in my inbox within 24 hours, complete with a correction to one of the questions that seems to suggest a new level of focus. I have asked him about the Bel Air mansion in which There's a Riot Goin' On was recorded - a notorious hub of drugs and guns, its grimly decadent mood encapsulated by an incident in which Stone's pet pitbull savaged his pet monkey to death, then had sex with its corpse in front of the horrified residents - but apparently I have got the number of the house slightly wrong. "I always wanted to tell my story, partly because not everybody knew my side of the story on some things," he says. "But the time wasn't right and I wasn't ready. When I got clean in 2019, that let the process start."

And it is a remarkable story. He formed the Family Stone in 1966, but initially, it looked like the ideas he had were too advanced: a racially integrated band playing music that existed somewhere on the cusp of soul and the burgeoning psychedelic rock movement, they encountered prejudice on tour ("some people weren't into seeing different races having fun together," as the late trumpeter Cynthia Robinson told me in 2013), and their debut album, A Whole New Thing, flopped. "I knew the music worked, but I didn't know if people would get it," says Stone. "That's what happened after the first album - I poured everything into those songs. Music people liked it, but not everyone was a music person. Dance to the Music came out as a simpler version, and more people understood that."

It was the first of a string of incredible singles - Everyday People, Stand!, Hot Fun in the Summertime, I Want to Take You Higher, Family Affair - that turned Sly Stone into one of the most influential figures in soul music. He became the man who ultimately caused the Temptations to transform themselves from the authors of My Girl into the makers of Cloud Nine, Psychedelic Shack and Ball of Confusion; who cleared the path for Parliament-Funkadelic; whose uncompromising way of handling things paved the way for other Black artists, including Stevie Wonder, to wrest control of their careers. No, he says, he was "never annoyed" when he saw other artists changing their sound to something more like his own. "I was always happy if someone took the things I was doing and they liked them enough to want to do them on their own. I'm proud that the music I made inspired people."

> **I always wanted to tell my story, partly because not everybody knew my side on some things**


Stone making his first appearance in 13 years at the Grammys in 2006

The Family Stone triumphed at Woodstock in 1969, but problems were looming. In the autobiography, he paints his increasing dependence on drugs - not just cocaine, but PCP (phenylcyclohexyl piperidine) as well - as a means of coping with the workload and the increasing expectations placed on him, but they seemed to make him more erratic. In 1970, the band missed 26 out of 80 dates they had booked. "The only thing I know that would have made life easier was to get booked into fewer shows, and get more information about when they were happening and where," he says. "The thing about being late to shows or not coming out started to be a reputation, which wasn't fair. A little of it was me, but most of it was the way the shows were organised."

Intra-band relations began to sour. If you want an example of the dysfunction within Sly and the Family Stone, the departure of Larry Graham - the genius bassist who invented the "slapping" technique - seems as good as any. It's one thing to leave a band because of musical differences or personality clashes, but it's quite another to depart amid such acrimony that Graham and Stone apparently believed the other had taken out a contract to have them killed. According to Stone, it all spiralled out of control after Graham clashed with Hamp "Bubba" Banks - who, depending on your perspective, was either Stone's PA or a gun-toting thug who did his bidding - over the affections of another band member, Stone's sister, Rose. "Larry and I didn't have a disagreement that I can remember," says Stone. "It turned out that Bubba had the argument with Larry - he didn't want anyone paying special attention to Rose, especially Larry. Since Bubba was one of my right hands, it was assumed that Bubba had my blessing, which he didn't. I heard about it later, but it was too late."

His sales began to wane after 1973's Fresh, by common consent the last truly killer album he released. By the end of the 70s, drugs had overtaken everything. His output slowed to a trickle of largely ignored albums, then stopped altogether. His life devolved into a round of temporary homes, run-ins with the police and ruthless dealers, fruitless visits to rehab and the constant scrabble for money to buy more drugs. It was then that Hirschkowitz first met him. She was 20, and "never involved in drugs", she says. "But after a few months with him I ended up trying them. It was hard not to, being around him. In his mind, he felt like drugs gave him energy to do music. It was ridiculous, but he always felt that drugs helped him, he was just so convinced of that in his mind."

> **I didn't like to be the kind of person who just drew the blinds and didn't work**

"Even in those days I worked," Stone reasons. "I didn't like to be the kind of person who just drew the blinds and didn't work. It was important to me that I was in a place where I could always create music. But," he adds, "I might have stopped [doing drugs] sooner knowing what I know now."

Of course, in a sense, Stone was ever-present in pop music throughout his lost years, albeit at one remove. You didn't have to be a genius to work out that Prince had modelled The Revolution on Sly and the Family Stone - a multiracial lineup, music that existed on the cusp of soul and rock - and when hip-hop and sampling arrived, his influence was more obvious still. One website lists nearly 1,000 tracks that sampled his work (Stone says his favourite was Janet Jackson's Rhythm Nation, and that he also liked Arrested Development's People Everyday). You could see why people wanted a full-blown comeback, but it never happened, and now it never will, his newfound sobriety notwithstanding. His health issues, he says, "haven't stopped me from hearing music, but they have stopped me from making it". Then he adds something else. I don't know if it's intended as such - it's just a line in an email - but it seems rather sad and wistful: "I can hear music in my mind."

Still, he has plenty to occupy him: not just the book and a forthcoming documentary, but the songs he amassed during the 80s, 90s and 00s - supposedly, there are thousands of them. He told me back in 2013 that he wanted to release them - "I want people to hear them because I know they'll like them" - but nothing has emerged yet. "Still trying to sort all that out," he says when I ask him again, "but my hope is sooner rather than later."

And he's understandably happy with his book. He enjoyed "the experience of reliving memories". "Sometimes I had a very clear picture of exactly where and what was happening," he says. "Other times we looked into history and I was surprised by how things ended up. But mostly it felt good. And it was a relief to finally tell it."

Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin) is published 17 October.

PHOTOGRAPHS: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE/GETTY; SBMG ARCHIVE/SONY MUSIC EBET ROBERTS/REDFERNS; LUCY NICHOLSON/REUTERS



Peter Bradshaw's film of the week

The Great Escaper



PHOTOGRAPH: ROB YOUNGSON/PATHE

Icons exude class in poignant D-day trip

★★★★☆

Dir *Oliver Parker*

Starring *Michael Caine, Glenda Jackson, John Standing*

96 mins **Cert** *12A*

Michael Caine and the late Glenda Jackson bring their A games to this true-life heartwarmer about the 89-year-old second world war Royal Navy veteran Bernard Jordan, who in 2014 jauntily sneaked out of his seaside care home (where he lived with his wife, Irene) on a secret mission to get aboard a cross-channel ferry and attend the 70th anniversary celebrations of the D-day landings in Normandy – having failed to get included on an official group excursion. He was dubbed "the great escaper" in the press, although then, as now, the care home insisted there was no question of forbidding Bernard from going, so there was no escape as such. Facetiously representing them as busybody elf 'n' safety camp commandants could have landed the film in legal hot water.

Caine is Jordan, bringing plenty of droll and lugubrious spark to the role, shuffling up and down the seafront, grumpily denouncing the cyclists almost running him over on the pavement as "tossers" and letting the air out of their tyres. But he is arguably upstaged by Jackson as Irene, or Rene, who is sarky to everyone, including care assistant Adele (an excellent Danielle Vitalis). She gets laughs in a way Caine's character doesn't as much. Rene has to cover up for Bernard; she tells the nurses and managers that her absent husband is just out on a long walk, giving Bernard enough time to get on the ferry before the alarm is raised.

Caine and Jackson are a great double-act, despite being apart for much of the film, and the film imagines an interesting and poignant rapport between Bernard and an ex-RAF officer on the ferry, sympathetically played by John Standing, heading for Normandy while crucified by a secret guilt. Caine has a bold flash of rage by the official graves at all the criminal waste of lives created by war.

Set against this, the flashback scenes of the young Rene and Bernard are less strong, and a flaw in the film is that it somehow can't help drifting towards an officially sanctioned sentimentality, rather like the BBC news coverage of the D-day celebrations, which we glimpse. It's a kind of piety that the lead performances are always working against. I'm inclined to wonder how many movie versions of Captain Sir Tom Moore and his lockdown charity walk were once in development in the same vein, with the same flashback structure, now abandoned or radically reimagined.

Caine and Jackson and their ineffable class give this film real grit: it's a wonderful last hurrah for Jackson.

Blackberry

★★★☆☆

Dir *Matt Johnson*

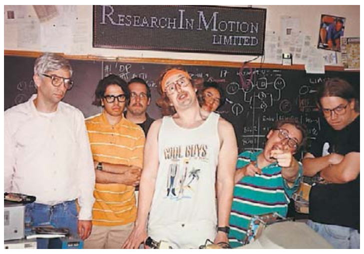
Starring *Jay Baruchel, Glenn Howerton, Matt Johnson*

120 mins **Cert** *15*

Here is a punchy Canadian comedy-drama in that burgeoning true-life genre that could loosely be called Tech Startup Hubris; we've seen Dumb Money (about GameStop), WeCrashed (about WeWork), and The Beanie Bubble (about the bizarre 90s craze for Beanie Babies). The great ancestor of them all is naturally The Social Network, about Facebook. This film is a fictionally souped-up account of the steep rise and sudden fall of the BlackBerry, the handset device that towards the end of the 00s was so ubiquitous and addictive among the white-collar classes it was known as the "Crackberry".

Jay Baruchel plays BlackBerry's greying co-founder, Mike Lazaridis; a shy, nerdy, brilliant innovator who is details-obsessive. Matt Johnson, the film's director and co-writer, plays Mike's goofball partner, Doug Fregin, and does little other than stare with sweaty incredulity at his buddy Mike selling out to the Man. This latter is represented by gimlet-eyed investor Jim Balsillie, played by Glenn Howerton, almost unrecognisable from his role on TV's It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia; Balsillie is the uptight suit who gets these nerdy slackers into financial shape (while of course betraying their ethos).

There is pure pathos when the BlackBerry team watch Steve Jobs demonstrating the iPhone, like silent movie veterans witnessing talkies, speaking out loud their own imminent demise.



Games



Assassin's Creed Mirage

PC, PS5, Xbox One, Series X/S

★★★★☆

Set in the years preceding the Viking-flavoured Assassin's Creed Valhalla, Mirage puts you in the foot wraps of pickpocket-turned-hitman-in-training Basim Ibn Ishaq. After a palace burglary goes wrong, you are forced to flee your village and join the Hidden Ones, taking up their fight against the Order, a secretive club worming its way into Baghdad's upper echelons of power.

While both clandestine groups operate in the shadows, your extrajudicial murders are presented as honourable, whereas the Order's are dastardly. It's not worth interrogating the game's morality too closely – thanks to Mirage's pickpocketing mechanic, you can rob the people blind, even stealing jewellery from nurses in a burns ward.

If you're acquainted with the series, this may all sound familiar. Mirage may even look like a regressive step: while 2007's Assassin's Creed had three cities to explore, Mirage only has one. But Basim's adventure gains much from tighter focus. The game has simplified combat, stripping out weapons added in Origins, Odyssey and Valhalla, leaving you with just a sword, a dagger and a new attack that allows you to pause time and target nearby enemies.

In returning to its roots, Ubisoft has made a more focused game, one those with limited time have a hope of completing. And the team has packed the city's sidestreets with fascinating snapshots of life – heated hagglers bickering in the bazaar, musicians drawing a crowd beside a mosque, and pigeon fanciers feeding their birds on a rooftop aviary. After a string of formless open-world games, Mirage is a stab in the right direction.

Julian Benson

20 Days in Mariupol

★★★★★

Dir *Mstyslav Chernov*

With *Volodymyr Zelenskiy, Vladimir Putin*

95 mins **Cert** *18*

There is genuine horror in this eyewitness documentary about Vladimir Putin's attack on the southern Ukrainian port city of Mariupol; I spent many moments of it with my head in my hands. The brutal siege lasted from February to May 2022; civilian centres were targeted and more than 20,000 people killed. The journalist and film-maker Mstyslav Chernov was there for 20 days, and filed video reports that helped to galvanise western opinion, particularly the horrific images of mass graves. But this movie is the uncut, unexpurgated version: the real nightmare, the real explicit obscenity which no TV executive would put on the nightly news.

Chernov shows the dead bodies of men, women, children and babies. But perhaps even more horribly, he shows in unthinkable closeup the wrenching anguish of those left behind, sobbing over the shattered bodies of their loved ones. It really is not to be borne.

He also shows us how the inhumanity of war manifests itself in other ways. Ukrainian civilians in Mariupol began looting: some food shops from sheer want, but also other places out of opportunism. A woman who owned a general store – smashed by the shelling – is shown confronting a man who is



walking out of it with goods under his arm, including a child's football which he is shamed into throwing back. Perhaps the people, in their wretchedness, think this plunder is a tiny recompense for the nightmare they are going through.

As for the Russian authorities, they brazenly claim it is all fake news. And here is where I had an uneasy memory of Sergei Loznitsa's 2018 film Donbass, which depicts the Russians confecting fake news; it was taken by many, including me, to be a satirical fantasy. But now Russian authorities believe, or pretend to believe, that the Ukrainians are doing it. This searing film bears a terrible witness to this great crime.



Alexis Petridis's album of the week

Sufjan Stevens Javelin



Epic shape-shifter sweeps us up in his heartache

Pop

Label Asthmatic Kitty

★★★★☆

In a music world that frequently seems to be predicated on more of the same, there's something tremendously appealing about the fact that you never quite know what a Sufjan Stevens album is going to sound like. Javelin arrives a few months after his last album, Reflections, a collection of technically challenging instrumental piano duo pieces written as the score to a ballet, reflecting Stevens' classical training. Should that sound dauntingly highbrow, it's worth noting that the concluding piece was titled And I Shall Come to You Like a Stormtrooper in Drag Serving Imperial Realness.

That was, in turn, preceded by albums that were acoustic (A Beginner's Mind); meditation-focused (Convocations); electronic (The Ascension); abstract (Music for Insomnia); another ballet soundtrack (The Decalogue); the space-themed Planetarium; and Carrie and Lowell, a sparse, wracked, grief-stricken meditation on the death of Stevens' mother. If that sounds like dilettantism, it never feels like it in reality. Possessed of an unfailing melodic ability, his greatest musical skill may lie in always seeming completely immersed in whatever project he's pursuing.

He sounds even more immersed than usual in the heartache of Javelin, led by the despairingly titled single Will Anybody Ever Love Me?. Everything That Rises has him begging Jesus for deliverance from romantic despair, and the eight-minute centrepiece Shit Talk is a crushing depiction of a relationship that hasn't quite ended but has clearly run its course. Musically, the album presents a succession of feints. Initially, every track seems like a return to his roots, when his primary musical focus was home-recorded alt-folk. But they seldom stay like that, instead unfurling in various different directions. A minute in, opener Goodbye Evergreen suddenly explodes into something epic and episodic, layered backing vocals over an immense, distorted industrial rhythm, passages of woodwind and beatless ambience, as if the arrangement is trying to express the dramatic shifts in mood that accompany emotional upheaval.

A Running Start takes longer to transform but by the end it resembles something akin to 60s sunshine pop, thick with vocal harmonies. Elsewhere, songs are consumed by synthesised bleeping or surge into Spector-esque walls of sound, or – in the case of Shit Talk – rise out of a sparkling guitar figure into arrangements thick with brass and woodwind, before giving way to a lengthy, glacial, droning coda. The shifts work together with the lyrics, which thrash about as people in the midst of emotional turmoil tend to, turning from desperate pleading – "Just say what you want" – to anger, to grim acceptance laced with mordant humour, to fear of the future.



The only song that stays in one place is the concluding version of Neil Young's There's a World, which you could read as a sly piece of music criticism. The original was among the songs on 1972's Harvest that Young unwisely smothered in melodramatic orchestration; Stevens' understated take seems to carry the implicit suggestion that Young should have left it alone.

At the end of last month, Stevens revealed he was suffering from a rare autoimmune condition that had left him unable to walk: he is expected to make a full recovery, but is unable to promote or tour his new album. He obviously has bigger things on his mind, but it is still a shame, because Javelin feels like a triumphant culmination of sorts. Perhaps no album could tie together all the strands of his musical career but, as it ranges from lo-fi singer-songwriter to baroque orchestration to opaque electronics to warped pop, Javelin comes surprisingly close: a remarkable achievement in itself. That it sounds like a holisitic album, one that flows rather than fractures, is remarkable, too – but it does, carrying the listener along with it as it goes.

More reviews at theguardian.com/music

Jazz album of the month

Artist Angelika Niescier, Tomeka Reid, Savannah Harris

Album Beyond Dragons

Label Intakt

★★★★☆



This set with the prodigious African American cello and drums pairing of Tomeka Reid and Savannah Harris is the latest to swell saxophonist Angelika Niescier's packed discography, a list that has joined trailblazing European and US partners on sharp-end original music, film soundtracks, nods to pioneers and all-out freefall. The seven Niescier originals here span fast, jagged pieces with abruptly interval-vaulting themes, voice-like tone poems of quiet sax exhalations or key-fluttering sounds like beating wings, looping repeat patterns that build to percussive thrashes. The 11-minute Hic Svnt Dracones passes through whooping fast alto lines to dark, atonal, skidding cello figures, and on to a pounding finale, while Oscillating Madness is almost choral in its shivery-bowed cello chords and barely breathed sax tones. Free jazz and immense improv expertise from the trio drive the urgent clamour of this music, but a composer's ear gives it shape, drama and contrast that hold the attention tight. **John Fordham**

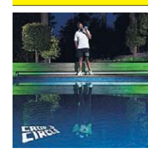
Rap

Artist Nines

Album Crop Circle 3

Label Zino/Warner

★★★★☆



Arriving months after his acclaimed Crop Circle 2, volume three finds London rapper Nines bidding farewell to music. Many artists falsely claim retirement, but if this is the end, Nines is going out on a high, casting his sonic net wider than ever to meld his gruff, easy flow with wobbly reggae, moody piano, trap, R&B, G-funk and gospel. CC3 has the makings of a send-off: Nigerian pop star Ayra Starr eschews Afrobeats for a haunting vocal on the bittersweet Only One, but there's also the corny singalong Toxic featuring Bradford bassline heroes Bad Boy Chiller Crew. Nines wants out of music-industry exploitation and seems adamant about reclaiming his agency: perhaps that's why Crop Circle 3 sounds so enticingly free. **Tara Joshi**

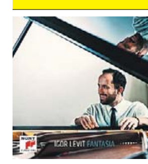
Classical

Artist Igor Levit

Album Fantasia: Works by Bach, Liszt, Berg and Busoni

Label Sony Classical

★★★★☆



Igor Levit has made a speciality of tackling some of the most monumental of 20th-century piano works, and at the heart of his fascination has been the Fantasia contrappuntistica, Ferruccio Busoni's homage to Bach's Art of Fugue. Recording it now, Levit says, "represents the final destination of the journey that I have been undertaking in terms of my repertory in recent years". He makes it the climax of a sequence beginning with Bach's Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue, continuing with Liszt's B minor Sonata and Berg's Sonata Op 1, crowned by the Busoni. There's something rather dogged about the Chromatic Fantasia, while the Liszt veers between lethargy and spontaneity. Berg's sonata is preceded by his tiny Klavierstück, one of four encore pieces Levit includes, all meticulously played. **Andrew Clements**



Jin Sun-kyu (left) and Jun Jong-seo in Bargain

Review Bargain, Paramount+

Addictive Korean drama is more deranged than Squid Game

★★★★☆

Lucy Mangan



It is inevitable that comparisons will be made between the new Korean drama Bargain and the all-conquering K-drama Squid Game that became the most watched show in Netflix history (racking up 1.65bn viewing hours in its first 28 days). So, let's make a brute list of their even more brute similarities.

Both shows are an addictive blend of relentless tension and escalating depravity. Both have mastered the art of making the viewer think "things can't possibly get any worse" before launching into another scene that proves the viewer wrong. Both are about capitalism and how it's going to send us all to hell in a handbasket sooner rather than later. They are both innovative, fascinating and unhinged. They both require you to lie down in a calm, darkened room after every episode. (The whole series of Bargain is being released at once, so it is technically bingeable but if you can manage that I would like you to hand yourself in at the nearest police station at once.)

Bargain is nevertheless its own thing. The series has grown out of an award-winning 2015 short film of the same name by Lee Chung-hyun. The television version is directed by Jeon Woo-sung, who was involved in making the original.

The first episode opens with a horrible negotiation between a young woman, Park Joo Young (Jun Jong-seo), offering to sell her virginity to an older man, Noh Hyung Soo (Jin Sun-kyu), in an isolated hotel for $1,000. Maybe we are in for a critique of the sex industry and patriarchy too? He gets the price down to $70, but he will soon come to regard that as very much the high point of his day, because the young woman is a cog in a well-oiled business machine that deals in trafficked human organs, and her would-be punter is soon bound and on display to an assembled throng of people bidding on his constituent parts. Maybe it's a female revenge fantasy as well? "Our first ordinary citizen in a while," says Park cheerfully. "We'll give you a minute to check out the merchandise … If you touch him, that's sexual harassment." Jeon knows it is good to mix your tale of illegal organ farming with humour.

A young man called Guk Ryeol (Chang Ryul) places the winning bid - thanks to a loan he takes out with the organisers that uses some of his own bits as collateral - for one of Noh's kidneys that is intended for his dying father. Then an earthquake hits, the hotel collapses and suddenly it's a 70s disaster movie as well as everything else. But now a pair of monstrous brothers, usually safely locked in the basement, are now free to roam. And the management looking to protect its secrets, are sending murderous thugs around the shattered building to do so. And there's another faction that may be planning a coup. And some surviving bidders who, as established by their attendance at an auction for living human tissue, are not the least murderous of people either. One notable difference Bargain does have from Squid Game is that there is no one to root for, no hapless innocent (relatively speaking) to get behind. They are all awful. There is a central hole right through the middle of the five-storey building that anyone can fall or be pushed into at any moment and there is no one here you would be even momentarily sorry to see go.

Park, Noh and Guk survive the earthquake and form a coalition of the unwilling. Guk helps Noh because he still reckons he owns the man's kidney and needs to protect his investment. Park, an absolutely mesmeric blend of charm, boredom and coolly appraising criminal, will ditch them the minute she can be sure she can escape alone - ideally with the $7m she knows the boss has stashed in his office - and Noh is losing his mind in the claustrophobic horror of it all and the audience is right there with him.

It is more complex and clever than Squid Game. Whether this will help to make it an even bigger hit or be a hindrance remains to be seen. But whoever sees a minute of it will be in for the duration. Though not all at once. Unless you can stomach that, in which case please seek help.

Ghosts
8:30pm, BBC One



It is time to say goodbye to Kitty, Julian, Pat and the ghoulish gang, as the last season of the smash-hit sitcom begins. In the first of six episodes (all available on iPlayer now), Alison (Charlotte Ritchie) and Mike (Kiell Smith-Bynoe) need to find other ways to keep Button House going after the gatehouse fire. But - much to our entertainment - Alison is far too distracted by trying to pull an April Fools' Day prank.
Hollie Richardson

Gardeners' World
9pm, BBC Two
It's time for Monty Don to harvest apples this week (all thoughts immediately turn to crumble, pudding and pie). He also shares his tips on what to do with windfalls and how to plant a container for winter insects. Elsewhere, Adam Frost visits a garden designer who has overcome extreme weather conditions. **HR**

Billions
9pm, Sky Atlantic
As the final season of this drama set in the amoral world of the ultra-rich approaches the endgame, its political dimension has made it all the more chilling. Could the appalling Michael Prince (Corey Stoll) really become president? This week, Chuck Rhoades (Paul Giamatti) shows how far he will go to stop that from happening. Meanwhile, Wendy spies an escape route.
Phil Harrison

Warrior
10pm, Sky Max
Wagons east! With their counterfeit dosh attracting too much heat on the streets of 1870s San Francisco, the Hop Wei gang plan to strike a deal with a rapacious German mining operation farther inland. But can heroic hatchet man Ah Sahm (Andrew Koji) turn a blind eye to the exploited Chinese workforce? Hell no.
Graeme Virtue

Drift: Partners in Crime
10.10pm, Sky Atlantic
It's the finale of the German thriller about two reunited cop brothers who uncover a conspiracy and have to constantly evade bad guys, usually by driving quickly. As Ali (Ken Duken) and Leo (Fabian Busch) come under suspicion, an investigative journalist becomes the target of a mafia assassin and a grand showdown beckons.
Jack Seale

The Graham Norton Show
10.40pm, BBC One
Elton John's partner in pop, Bernie Taupin, joins Norton for a rare interview to discuss his new memoir this week. Also squeezing on to the sofa are Top Boy's Ashley Walters, comedian Bill Bailey and soon-to-be West End star Catherine Tate. French popster Christine and the Queens provides the music. **HR**

What's On
Scan the QR code below to sign up for the What's On newsletter, our free TV email with the best reviews, news and exclusive writing direct to your inbox every Monday

BBC One

6.0 **Breakfast** (T) **9.15** Rip Off Britain (T) **10.0** Crimewatch Live (T) **10.45** Claimed and Shamed (T) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) **1.0** News (T) **1.30** Regional News (T) **1.45** Five Bedrooms (T) **2.30** Money for Nothing (T) **3.0** Escape to the Country (T) (R) **3.45** The Bidding Room (T) (R) **4.30** The Vintage French Farmhouse (T) **5.15** Pointless (T) (R) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News (T) **6.55** Party Political Broadcast (T) (R) **7.0** The One Show (T) **7.30** Make It at Market (T)

8.0 **Would I Lie to You?** (T) (R) With Victoria Derbyshire, Rhod Gilbert, Rosie Jones and Jamali Maddix.
8.30 **Ghosts** (T) New series. With the B&B gone, Mike strives to fix their finances.
9.0 **Have I Got News for You** (T) New series. Hosted by Victoria Coren Mitchell.
9.30 **Mrs Brown's Boys** (T) (R)

10.0 **News** (T)
10.30 **Regional News** (T) Weather
10.40 **The Graham Norton Show** (T) With Catherine Tate, Bill Bailey, Bernie Taupin and Ashley Walters. Plus, music by Christine and the Queens.
11.30 **RuPaul's Drag Race UK** (T) (R) Yasmin Finney guests.
12.35 **Blankety Blank** (T) (R) **1.10** Weather (T) **1.15** News (T)

BBC Two

6.30 **Escape to the Country** (T) (R) **7.15** The Vintage French Farmhouse (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: Gardeners' World (T) (R) **9.0** Nicky Campbell (T) **10.0** News (T) **12.15** Politics UK (T) **1.0** Impossible (T) (R) **1.45** Eggheads (T) (R) **2.15** Wanted Down Under (T) (R) **3.0** Murder, Mystery and My Family (T) (R) **3.45** Great Canadian Railway Journeys (T) (R) **4.15** Serengeti III (T) (R) **5.15** Flog It! (T) (R) **6.0** Richard Osman's House of Games (T) **6.30** Strictly: It Takes Two (T)

7.0 **Gymnastics: World Championships** (T) The women's individual all-around final in Antwerp.
9.0 **Gardeners' World** (T) It is apple harvest time and Monty Don shares tips on what to do with windfalls before planting a container to give a colourful boost for winter insects.

10.0 **Red Dwarf** (T) (R)
10.30 **Newsnight** (T) Weather
11.05 FILM **Official Secrets** (Gavin Hood, 2019) (T) Fact-based drama, starring Keira Knightley and Matt Smith.
12.50 **Sign Zone** Panorama (T) (R) **1.50** Clean It, Fix It (T) (R) **2.35** Picasso: The Beauty and the Beast (T) (R) **3.35** This Is BBC Two (T)

ITV1

6.0 **Good Morning Britain** (T) **9.0** Lorraine (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **12.30** Loose Women (T) **1.30** News and Weather (T) **1.55** Local News and Weather (T) **2.0** James Martin's Great British Adventure (T) (R) **3.0** Tenable (T) **4.0** Tipping Point (T) **5.0** The Chase (T) **6.0** Local News and Weather (T) **6.25** Party Political Broadcast (T) **6.30** News and Weather (T) **7.0** Emmerdale (T)

7.30 **Rugby World Cup 2023 Live** (T) France v Italy (kick-off 8pm). All the action from both teams' final match in Pool A, held at OL Lyon Stadium in France. Mark Pougatch presents, with analysis from Brian O'Driscoll, Sergio Parisse and Jonny Wilkinson.

10.25 **News** (T) Weather
11.0 **Local News** (T) Weather
11.15 **The NFL Show** (T) Highlights of Jacksonville Jaguars v Atlanta Falcons at Wembley.
12.05 **Heathrow** (T) (R) **12.55** All Elite Wrestling (T) (R) **2.40** Tipping Point (T) (R) **3.30** Back to School (T) (R) **4.20** Unwind With ITV (T) (R) **5.10** Tenable (T) (R)

Channel 4

6.05 **Countdown** (T) (R) **6.45** Cheers (T) (R) **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) **8.25** Frasier (T) (R) **9.55** Chateau DIY (T) (R) **10.55** George Clarke's Amazing Spaces (T) (R) **11.55** News (T) **12.0** Steph's Packed Lunch (T) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** A Place in the Sun (T) (R) **4.0** The Great House Giveaway (T) **5.0** A New Life in the Sun (T) (R) **6.0** Four in a Bed (T) **6.30** The Simpsons (T) (R) **7.0** News (T)

8.0 **The Secret World of Sandwiches** (T) (R) Jo Brand unwraps the story of sandwiches and how they evolved from a curly 1970s joke to today's pre-packaged staples.
9.0 **Gogglebox** (T) The armchair critics share their opinions on what they have been watching during the week.

10.0 **Open House: The Great Sex Experiment** (T)
11.05 FILM **Deadpool 2** (2018) (T) Action comedy, starring Ryan Reynolds and Josh Brolin.
1.15 FILM **Peppermint** (2018) (T) Revenge thriller. **2.55** Ramsay's 24 Hours to Hell and Back (T) (R) **3.45** Find It, Fix It, Flog It (T) (R) **3.55** Come Dine With Me (T) (R)

Channel 5

6.0 **Milkshake!** **9.15** Jeremy Vine (T) **11.15** Storm Huntley (T) **12.40** Alexis Conran (T) **1.40** News (T) **1.45** Home and Away (T) (R) **2.15** FILM Gone Girl: The Disappearance of Jennifer Dulos (Gail Harvey, 2020) (T) **4.0** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (T) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** Dogs Behaving (Very) Badly (T) (R) **7.0** Shop Smart, Save Money (T)

8.0 **Susan Calman's Grand Day Out** (T) New series. The comedian takes in the northern Pennines and Northumberland coast.
9.0 **Amazing Railway Adventures With Nick Knowles** (T) The presenter tours Romania, and visits the region's top tourist attraction, Bran castle.

10.0 FILM **The Fugitive** (Andrew Davis 1993) (T) A doctor wrongly convicted of his wife's murder goes on the run. Thriller, starring Harrison Ford.
12.35 **ICC Cricket World Cup 2023** (T) **1.30** Live Casino Show (T) **3.30** Friends (T) (R) **4.15** The Funny Thing About Kids (T) (R) **5.05** House Busters (T) (R)

BBC Four

7.0 **Top of the Pops** (T) (R) From 1995, with the Boo Radleys, Radiohead and Stevie Wonder **7.30** Top of the Pops (T) (R) Featuring Terrorvision, Janet Jackson and Céline Dion, from 1995.

8.0 **Top of the Pops** (T) (R) An edition from 1983, with Freeez, David Bowie, New Order and Culture Club.
8.30 **Top of the Pops** (T) (R) From 1980, featuring Status Quo, Diana Ross, OMD, Black Slate and the Nolans.
9.0 **Elton John at the BBC** (T) (R) A selection of interviews and appearances on the BBC.

10.0 **Elton John: In Concert** (T) A gig from 1970.
10.30 **Elton John: Uncensored** (T) (R) A 2019 interview.
11.30 **The Making of Elton John: Madman Across the Water** (T) (R) His rise to stardom.
12.30 **Top of the Pops** (T) (R) **2.30** Elton John at the BBC (T) (R) **3.30** Elton John: In Concert (T) (R)

Other channels

BBC Three
7.0pm Top Gear **8.0** Top Gear **8.55** The Catch Up **9.0** Do Black Lives Still Matter? **9.30** Do Black Lives Still Matter? **10.0** FILM Alien (1979) **11.55** The Bold Type **12.35** Do Black Lives Still Matter? **1.05** Do Black Lives Still Matter? **1.35** The Fast and the Farmer-ish **2.05** The Fast and the Farmer-ish **2.35** Juice **3.0** Juice **3.25** Gavin & Stacey

Dave
6.0am Teleshopping **7.10** Yianni: Supercar Customiser **7.35** Yianni: Supercar Customiser **8.0** Border Force: America's Gatekeepers **9.0** Special Ops: Crime Squad UK **10.0** Railroad Australia **11.0** Rick Stein's Mediterranean Escapes **12.0** Storage Hunters UK **12.30** Storage Hunters UK **1.0** Repair Lot **2.0** Top Gear **3.0** Top Gear Botswana Special **4.0** Rick Stein's Cornwall **4.30** Rick Stein's Cornwall **5.0** Jack Stein: Born to Cook **5.30** Jack Stein: Born to Cook **6.0** Pointless **7.0** Richard Osman's House of Games **7.40** Richard Osman's House of Games **8.20** QI XL **9.20** Would I Lie to You? At Christmas **10.0** QI XL **11.0** Taskmaster **12.0** Mock the Week **12.40** Mock the Week **1.20** Would I Lie to You? At Christmas **2.0** QI XL **2.50** Outsiders **4.0** Teleshopping

E4
6.0am Hollyoaks **6.30** Hollyoaks **7.0** Married at First Sight UK **8.0** Melissa & Joey **8.30** Melissa & Joey **9.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **9.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **10.0** The Big Bang Theory **10.30** The Big Bang Theory **11.0** Modern Family **11.30** Modern Family **12.0** The Big Bang Theory **12.30** The Big Bang Theory **1.0** The Big Bang Theory **1.30** The Big Bang Theory **2.0** The Goldbergs **2.30** The Goldbergs **3.0** Modern Family **3.30** Modern Family **4.0** Married at First Sight UK **5.0** The Big Bang Theory **5.30** The Big Bang Theory **6.0** The Big Bang Theory **6.30** The Big Bang Theory **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** Young Sheldon **8.0** Modern Family **8.30** Modern Family **9.0** FILM A Quiet Place (2018) **10.50** Naked Attraction **11.55** Naked Attraction **12.55** Gogglebox **2.0** First Dates **3.0** Naked Attraction **3.55** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **4.20** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **4.50** Black-ish

Film4
11.0am FILM Carry on Constable (1960) **12.45** FILM The Holly and the Ivy (1952) **2.25** FILM The Court-Martial of Billy Mitchell (1955) **4.30** FILM Cutthroat Island (1995) **6.55** FILM Pacific Rim: Uprising (2018) **9.0** FILM Mission: Impossible - Fallout (2018) **11.55** FILM xXx: The Return of Xander Cage (2017) **2.0** FILM The Guard (2011)

ITV2
6.0am CITV **9.0** One Tree Hill **10.0** Dawson's Creek **11.0** Dress to Impress **12.0** Dinner Date **1.0** Family Fortunes **2.0** Chuck **3.05** One Tree Hill **4.0** Dawson's Creek **5.0** Dinner Date **6.0** Celebrity Catchphrase **7.0** Alan Carr's Epic Gameshow: Celebrity Special **8.0** Superstore **8.30** Superstore **9.0** FILM Wedding Crashers (2005) **11.25** Family Guy **11.55** Family Guy **12.25** American Dad! **12.55** American Dad! **1.20** Bob's Burgers **1.50** Bob's Burgers **2.15** CelebAbility **2.55** Unwind With ITV **3.0** Teleshopping **5.0** Dodo **5.15** Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated **5.35** Craig of the Creek

Sky Max
6.0am Supergirl **7.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **8.0** The Flash **9.0** Stargate SG-1 **11.0** Supergirl **12.0** The Flash **1.0** NCIS: Los Angeles **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** Strike Back: Retribution **9.0** The Lazarus Project **10.0** Warrior **11.10** FILM Game of Death (1978) **1.0** The Blacklist **2.0** Road Wars **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** Highway Patrol

Sky Arts
6.0am Darbar: Music of India **7.0** Anyone Can Sing **8.0** The Joy of Painting **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **9.30** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **10.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Roy Scheider **12.0** The Joy of Painting **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **1.35** FILM Sherlock Holmes and the Woman in Green (1945) **3.0** Portrait Artist of the Year: The Exhibition **4.0** Discovering: Joseph Cotten **5.0** Tales of the Unexpected **5.30** Tales of the Unexpected **6.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **6.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **7.0** The Joy of Painting **8.0** Discovering: Michael Douglas **9.0** Bowie: The Man Who Changed the World **11.0** Led Zeppelin: In the Light **12.15** Led Zeppelin: In the Light **1.30** Brian Johnson's A Life on the Road **2.30** Greatest Albums Live **3.55** Live from the Artists Den **5.05** The South Bank Show

Sky Atlantic
6.10am The Guest Wing **7.55** Six Feet Under **10.05** Ray Donovan **12.15** Game of Thrones **1.20** Your Honor **3.30** Six Feet Under **5.40** Ray Donovan **7.55** Game of Thrones **9.0** Billions **10.10** Drift: Partners in Crime **11.10** Das Boot **1.15** In Treatment **1.45** Game of Thrones **4.0** The Guest Wing



Elton John, BBC Four

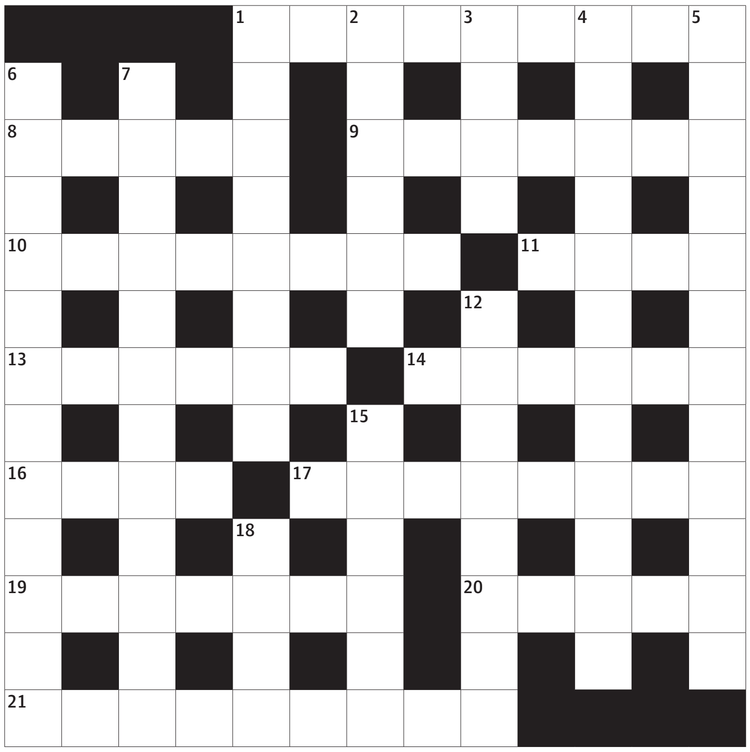
Radio

Radio 3
6.30am Breakfast **9.0** Essential Classics **12.0** Composer of the Week: Garcia (5/5) **1.0** Lunchtime Concert. Pianist Cédric Tiberghien plays Beethoven's 24 Variations on Venni Amore, and violinist Ariadne Daskalakis and harpsichordist Michael Borgstede perform Vivaldi. **2.0** Afternoon Concert. Violinist Leonidas Kavakos plays Brahms's Violin Concerto in D, Op 77, with the NDR Philharmonic Orchestra. **4.30** The Listening Service (R) **5.0** In Tune **7.0** Classical Mixtape **7.30** In Concert. Live from the Barbican, London, Sakari Oramo conducts the BBC Symphony Orchestra and pianist Alexandra Dariescu in Ligeti's Concert Romanesc, Dora Pejačević's's Phantasie Concertante and Mahler's Symphony No 5 in C sharp minor. **10.0** The Verb **10.45** The Essay: Rainsong in Five Senses. Dr Tess Somervell considers how rain is responded to in British culture. (R) **11.0** Late Junction **1.0** Ultimate Calm (R) **2.0** Happy Harmonies With Laufey (R) **3.0** Through the Night

Radio 4
6.0am Today **9.0** Desert Island Discs (R) **9.45** (LW) Daily Service **9.45** (FM) Book of the Week: How to Be a Renaissance Woman. By Jill Burke. (5/5) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** The Briefing Room (R) **11.30** What's Funny About. Griff Rhys Jones spills the beans on Alas Smith and Jones. (6/6) **12.0** News **12.01** (LW) Shipping Forecast **12.04** Archive on 4: How the Yom Kippur War Changed Everything, for Everyone (R) **12.57** Weather **1.0** The World at One **1.45** Uncharted With Hannah Fry. The student who went head to head with two of the greatest economic minds in modern times. (10/10) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** The System. Thriller, by Ben Lewis. (4/5) **2.45** Close Encounters. Katherine Grainger discusses swimmer Mercedes Gleitze. (R) **3.0** Gardeners' Question Time: Postbag **3.45** Short Works. The Bubble Bursts, by Alex Preston. **4.0** Last Word **4.30** More Or Less (R) **5.0** PM **5.54** (LW) Shipping Forecast **5.57** Weather **6.0** News **6.30** The News Quiz (5/8) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Screenshot. Ellen E Jones and Mark Kermode celebrate the 50th anniversary of Nicolas Roeg's Don't Look Now, with co-screenwriter Allan Scott. (9/9) **8.0** Any Questions? **8.50** A Point of View **9.0** Yeats and Heaney: A Terrible Beauty. The parallels between the careers of the two Irish Nobel laureates. (R) **9.59** Weather **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime: Rizzio (5/5) **11.0** Americast **11.30** Lusus: Boonies (R) **12.0** News **12.30** Book of the Week: How to Be a Renaissance Woman (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Close Encounters (R)

Radio 4 Extra
6.0am Project Archangel (2/4) **6.30** High Table, Lower Orders (1/6) **7.0** Ricky (5/5) **7.15** Madame Bovary (10/10) **7.30** The Break (6/6) **8.0** Marriage Lines (10/13) **8.30** Kathmandu Or Bust (1/6) **9.0** Whispers (5/6) **9.30** Barbara Nice (2/4) **10.0** Baldi (4/6) **10.45** Short Works **11.0** Project Archangel (2/4) **11.30** High Table, Lower Orders (1/6) **12.0** Ricky (5/5) **12.15** Madame Bovary (10/10) **12.30** The Break (6/6) **1.0** Marriage Lines (10/13) **1.30** Kathmandu Or Bust (1/6) **2.0** Whispers (5/6) **2.30** Barbara Nice (2/4) **3.0** Baldi (4/6) **3.45** Short Works **4.0** Project Archangel (2/4) **4.30** High Table, Lower Orders (1/6) **5.0** Ricky (5/5) **5.15** Madame Bovary (10/10) **5.30** The Break (6/6) **6.0** Marriage Lines (10/13) **6.30** Kathmandu Or Bust (1/6) **7.0** Whispers (5/6) **7.30** Barbara Nice (2/4) **8.0** The Tarpaulin: A Biography **8.30** Soul Music (1/6) **9.0** Monsters of Music With Tom Allen **9.30** Soho Nights (5/5) **10.0** Funny Women at 20 **10.30** 4 Stands Up (1/6) **11.0** 2000 Years of Radio (6/6) **11.15** Steven Appleby's Normal Life (6/6) **11.30** The Mark Steel Lecture (2/4) **12.0** The Yellow Wallpaper **12.45** Get Carter: The Bloody Chamber (4/5) **1.0** Baldi (4/6) **1.45** Short Works **2.0** Project Archangel (2/4) **2.30** High Table, Lower Orders (1/6) **3.0** Ricky (5/5) **3.15** Madame Bovary (10/10) **3.30** The Break (6/6) **4.0** Marriage Lines (10/13) **4.30** Kathmandu Or Bust (1/6) **5.0** Whispers (5/6) **5.30** Barbara Nice (2/4)

Quick crossword no 16,667



Across
1 Home for stingers? (5,4)
8 Signal warning of danger (5)
9 Large American smoked meat sausage (7)
10 Nerdy fashion? (4,4)
11 Emmets (4)
13 Almost (6)
14 Italian-style ice-cream (6)
16 Carnal desire (4)
17 Gradually (3,2,3)
19 Imaginary line around the Earth, equidistant from both poles (7)
20 Pacific, for example (5)
21 Pretty shoddy (5-4)

Down
1 (Of heifers) pregnant (4,4)
2 Put forward (6)
3 Only one (4)
4 Marble sculptures from the Parthenon in Athens now held in the British Museum (5,7)
5 Firing at clay pigeons (4,8)
6 Constituency where the MP has an uncomfortably small majority (8,4)
7 A certain something (2,2,4,4)
12 Town in south-west Wales, with a Norman castle where Henry Tudor, later King Henry VII, was born (8)
15 Range of jagged-peaked mountains (6)
18 It can get screwed into a boot (4)

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Sudoku no 6,227

Hard. Fill the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9.

8		1						
6	7			1		3		
			4				6	
		4	3				7	
7		9				4		3
	6				8	9		
	9				1			
		7		2			4	6
						5		7

Suguru

Fill the grid so that each square in an outlined block contains a digit. A block of two squares contains the digits 1 and 2, a block of three squares contains the digits 1, 2 and 3, and so on. No same digit appears in neighbouring squares, not even diagonally.

2					
	3		2		
					2
			3		
	4				

Wordsearch

Can you find 15 words contaning a double T in the grid? Words can run forwards, backwards, vertically or diagonally, but always in a straight, unbroken line.

N	P	D	M	O	B	Y	K	C
J	R	D	O	E	T	N	I	A
Y	R	N	E	T	T	T	O	A
T	L	C	E	T	T	T	O	D
T	I	J	A	A	T	Y	L	M
A	T	T	U	N	E	U	B	E
C	T	R	I	N	A	I	G	L
Y	E	O	Y	T	T	U	P	T
R	R	E	T	T	E	L	I	T
A	L	G	E	N	M	O	P	E
C	G	R	I	T	T	Y	D	K

Garry Trudeau
Doonesbury



Yesterday's solutions

Sudoku no 6,226

3	9	1	8	5	6	2	4	7
5	6	8	7	2	4	9	1	3
7	4	2	1	9	3	6	8	5
4	2	6	9	7	8	5	3	1
9	3	5	4	6	1	7	2	8
1	8	7	2	3	5	4	9	6
6	7	4	3	1	2	8	5	9
2	1	9	5	8	7	3	6	4
8	5	3	6	4	9	1	7	2

Suguru

3	1	2	4	5	3
2	4	3	1	2	1
1	5	2	4	3	5
4	3	1	5	1	2
1	5	2	3	4	3
2	3	4	1	2	1

Wordsearch

I	S	H	C	D	Y	R	I	G
S	T	E	O	M	U	L	A	N
C	H	U	M	M	Y	M	O	R
I	N	U	M	S	M	M	M	E
N	M	T	O	A	M	M	M	Y
T	O	E	N	A	A	D	E	E
L	U	M	G	M	L	R	M	A
R	U	M	M	Y	C	I	M	M
N	S	A	M	U	T	E	E	M
H	L	R	I	Y	S	A	T	O
E	R	E	M	M	I	D	L	C

Solution no 16,666

B	U	T	T		W	A	I	N	S	C	O	T
A		O		S		T		U		H		O
S	A	T	C	H	E	L		B	R	A	I	D
S		A		U		O		I		U		O
C	A	L	I	F		G	L	A	N	C	E	
L				T		G				E		V
E	A	T	L	I	K	E	A	H	O	R	S	E
F		E				R		O				R
	F	L	I	N	C	H		L	E	G	G	Y
E		L		A		E		L		N		W
D	R	I	E	D		A	N	E	M	O	N	E
I		N		E		D		R		M		L
T	I	G	E	R	I	S	H		H	E	E	L

Word wheel
BRAINWAVE

Word wheel

Find as many words as possible using the letters in the wheel. Each must use the central letter and at least two others. Letters may be used only once. You may not use plurals, foreign words or proper nouns. There is at least one nine-letter word to be found. TARGET: Excellent-36. Good-30. Average-22.



Trivia corner



How many years did David Tennant spend as Doctor Who?

a. Three
b. Four
c. Five
d. Six
*Answer top right**

TODAY'S TRIVIA CORNER ANSWER FIVE